

**THE WORKS**  
**OF THE**  
**LONG MOURNFUL AND SORELY DISTRESSED**  
**ISAAC PENINGTON**

**WHOM THE LORD IN HIS TENDER MERCY, AT LENGTH VISITED AND RELIEVED BY  
THE MINISTRY OF THAT DESPISED PEOPLE**

**CALLED QUAKERS**

**AND IN THE SPRINGINGS OF THAT LIGHT, LIFE, AND HOLY POWER IN HIM, WHICH  
THEY HAD TRULY AND FAITHFULLY TESTIFIED OF, AND DIRECTED HIS MIND TO,  
WERE THESE THINGS WRITTEN**

**AND ARE NOW PUBLISHED AS A THANKFUL TESTIMONY OF THE GOODNESS OF THE  
LORD UNTO HIM, AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS**

**"THEY ALSO THAT ERRED IN SPIRIT SHALL KNOW UNDERSTANDING, AND THEY THAT MURMURED SHALL LEARN DOCTRINE."**

**ISAIAH 29:24**

**VOLUME 2**

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**There is likewise something added concerning the GROUND of ERROR, and the Way to TRUTH and UNITY, for the Sake of such as are more Spiritual, and have been more inwardly exercised in searching after TRUTH**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. Matt. 15:9**

## PREFACE

THE mystery of iniquity (which overspread the earth under the shape and appearance of holy church, and holy worship) did begin to work in the apostles' days. 2 Thes. 2:7. And this was the way whereby the god of this world did deceive; he endeavored to blind men's minds, to put out their right eye, 2 Cor. 4:4. to draw from the Spirit, from the anointing, 1 John 2:26, to rob of the eye-salve wherewith the eye must be anointed to see the things of God, Rev. 3:18. And now when he has done this, how easily may his false ware pass for true! His synagogue (built in the likeness of the true church, Rev. 3:9), for the true church! Antichrist, his son (sitting in the temple like Christ, 2 Thes. 2:4), for the true Christ! His doctrines, for the true teaching! Mat. 15:2. His feigned, formal, dead, earthly traditions, for the true, everlasting gospel! Rev. 14:6. His Gentiles, or Heathens (who are so in nature, and Christians only in name), for the true Christians! Rev. 11:2.

"The light of the body is the eye," says Christ, by way of parable. Mat. 6:22,23. Now if the eye be dark, "if the light which is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" How shall you see the gospel, the church, the Spirit, the things of God? But if that eye be clear, who shall be able to blind you? The devil may come with his deceits, his false church, his false gospel, his false power, etc., yes, though his spirit creep into the very true form of godliness, you will be able to discern him there. But if you see with another's eye, you may easily see amiss, mistake Christ, mistake the church, and so believe as the false church believes, and fare as the false church fares.

Oh! who shall redeem the deceived nations back to the Spirit? Who shall preach to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, the everlasting gospel? Who shall open the eye in them which has been so long blinded? Who shall take the golden cup of fornication from their lips, and loosen their hearts from the sorceries, flatteries, and enchantments of the false woman?

The everlasting bowels of the Lord roll toward his poor captivated seed, and towards the poor deceived nations; and he is now preparing to build the ruins of many generations. He is bringing forth that power of truth, that demonstration of his Spirit in the spirits of his people, as no paint shall be able to stand before. He will rend the veil of the covering from off all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall be seen by the eye which he opens and anoints; and that which has deceived, and destroyed, and led from the truth, building up a mystery of unrighteousness in the stead of it; even the beast and false prophet (which wrought miracles, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image), shall be taken, and cast alive into the lake, Rev. 19:20. Then captivity shall be led captive; and those which have been led captive shall creep out of their dens, and out of their holes, into the light of the living, and worship the true and everlasting King, when the king Abaddon is destroyed. Rev. 15:2,3,4.

Oh! who shall be accounted worthy to be taught by the Lord where to wait for this? To whom will the Lord discover the place of wisdom (the place where wisdom is learned, her voice heard, and her instructions to life received), which is hid from the eyes of all living? Job 28:21. Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? They are them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts of the false woman. Isai. 28:9, and chap. 52:15. They that are turned from man, from the fleshly wisdom in themselves, towards the spring of life, they may hear the voice of this wisdom, which begins in the living fear and power; which effectually turns the heart from death

and darkness towards the living God; to worship him in spirit and in truth, according to the pure, living teachings thereof; and not after the inventions, imaginations, and traditions of men: and he that is once come here, as he is true and faithful to the light of life, doing the will as it is made manifest to him, shall know more and more of the doctrine, John 7:17. and have his feet infallibly guided into, and preserved in, the way of peace.

### **The Root of Popery struck at**

PROPOSITION I. That councils may err (if I should add, and have erred, it might not be impossible to prove it).

First, In that they are men not perfected in the knowledge, faith, and obedience of the truth, it necessarily implies a capacity of error, both in relation to the knowledge, to the faith, and to the obedience.

Secondly, Their doubtful disputation of things, and long canvassing, imply an uncertainty, and possibility of erring.

Thirdly, Their way of determining things at last (which is by a vote of the major part) is an uncertain way of determination; for it is not impossible but the major part may be over-swayed by by-ends, and in relation to their own advantage and interest, against the righteousness and equity of the reason of the lesser part: so that the way of determining things by a council is not a certain way in itself; but because men know not well how to find out a better and more probable way of deciding controversies, they judge it necessary to acquiesce therein. But the votes and determinations of men concerning a thing do not conclude a thing to be true or false in itself; they only signify their opinion, judgment, and testimony concerning the thing, the validity whereof depends upon their knowledge of the thing; which if it be not clear, full, and certain, their testimony, opinion, or judgment is of little value. Truth remains the same in itself, though all the wise men in the world should testify against it, calling it error, or heresy; and falsehood can never become truth, though ever so many wise men should testify for it, putting the fairest habit and appearance of truth upon it that they can.

PROPOSITION II. That the pope himself may err.

The pope has not greater freedom from fallibility in judgment or doctrine than Peter himself had. Now Peter had not only a capacity of error in him, but he did err in that doctrine which he taught the Gentiles, of living after the manner of the Jews; for he did not only do the thing itself, Gal. 2:12. but he compelled the Gentiles to do the same thing, holding it forth as a practice which ought to be observed by the Gentiles, ver. 14. for which carriage of his, Paul withstood him to the face, and said, "he was to be blamed," ver. 11. And the council of Constance, deposing pope John, and advancing the authority of councils above the pope, did plainly imply that the pope might err; which might further be confirmed by what the council of Basil determined concerning pope Eugenius.

PROPOSITION III. That every man may err in his interpretation of scriptures, further than he has a certain and infallible opening of them to his spirit, by that Spirit which gave them forth. The Spirit knows his own mind in every word which he has spoken; but no man knows his mind, nor the meaning

of his words, but as he reveals them. 1 Cor. 2:11. So that God is true in all his sayings in the scriptures; but man is a liar in all the meanings he gives of his sayings, according to his own guessings, reasonings, and imaginings, without the Spirit's infallible opening of his own words to him. So that the Spirit itself is the ground and foundation of all true light and knowledge of the things of God.

PROPOSITION IV. That if there be any light to be found any where shining from God, that light cannot err: for God is pure; and that which comes immediately from him cannot but be pure. All the knowledge which man gathers, or can gather, into his vessel, he may pollute; but what issues from the spring is pure, and of a perfect nature. James 1:17.

PROPOSITION V. That there must necessarily be such a light communicated to all men since the fall, that they may believe thereby, come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved; which I prove thus:

1. From the will of God. The apostle says expressly, that "God would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. 2:4. Why then there must necessarily be something dispensed from God to all men, sufficient to bring them to the "knowledge of the truth," that they may be "saved."

2. From what is found in man. There is found in man a light shining in his darkness, John 1:5. a light discovering the darkness, and drawing from it; something which checks and reproves the sinner, but never consented to the evil of his heart and ways. This is of God; this is from God; this is pure; this is spiritual; nor of the fleshly, not of the natural; for then it might be drawn some time or other to consent to some of the corrupt desires of the natural; but though the conscience be ever so much defiled, yet the light in itself can never be defiled. Indeed a man may set up that for light in his conscience, which may be darkness; but God's light, God's witness there, can never be bribed, but will speak truly, (when God at any time awakens, or raises it up) witnessing for him, both against the evil of the man, and against the searedness, hardness, and unfaithfulness of his conscience towards God.

PROPOSITION VI. That this being let in, believed in, and obeyed, shines more and more unto the perfect day; even until it has wholly brought out of the error into the truth. Every way of it is infallible, and every step of the creature after it is infallible. Indeed the creature's reasonings and consultations about it may be fallible; but the light is infallible in itself; and so far as there is a pure, simple, naked thing begotten by it (for it is of a begetting nature, James 1:17,18), so far there is an acknowledgment of its certainty in the creature. There are some things that all the men of the earth certainly know to be evil, by means of its shining; and some things also that they certainly know to be good; and at some times there is a will begotten in them towards the good, and against the evil: now if they did honestly wait in the singleness of this will, breathing to the God of power to have it brought to victory in them, the light would shine more and more from his presence; and in the light, the power and saving arm would arise; which would effectually lead out of the death and captivity, into the fellowship and freedom of the life.

PROPOSITION VII. That nothing less can lead unto eternal life than an eternal light in man's spirit, where the darkness is; which is to be discovered there, subdued there, and to be led from. This was the apostle's message (who received and came with the message of the gospel), "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." 1 John 2:5. And this they preached to bring men into fellowship with this

light, ver. 3. that they might walk with God in it, and there be cleansed by the blood of Jesus through it. ver. 7. Which that they might obtain, they must first be turned from darkness to it, Acts 26:18, and from the power and kingdom of Satan to the seed of the kingdom of God, Mat. 23:31. which Christ told the Pharisees was within them. Luke 17:21. And the Apostle Paul told the Hebrews, that the laws of the covenant, whereof Christ was the Minister and Mediator, were by the tenor of the new covenant, to be written in the heart and mind by the Spirit; and not to be written outwardly, as that covenant was which God made with the Jews by Moses, Heb. 8:6, etc. which was not the eternal covenant itself, but a shadow of it; which made nothing perfect, but only made way for the hope of a better covenant, by which believers draw nigh to God. Heb. 7:19. Yes, Moses himself tells the Jews, that the commandment of life, the Word Eternal (according to faith wherein, and obedience whereto, they were to live or die eternally) was within them. Deut. 30:14,15. And Paul tells the church at Rome, that this was the word of faith which they preached; that it was also the covenant of life and death under the gospel. Rom. 10:8. Christ is the light of the world, John 8:12. or the Eternal Word, John 1:1. which Light or Word speaks within every man's conscience. He that believes in it, brings his deeds to it, and obeys it, is justified by it; but he that hates its reproof, is condemned by it, John 3:20,21. and not only shut out of life, but out of the very ways to it; for the reproofs of the instruction of this wisdom are the sole way or path of life to the sinner. Prov. 6:23.

Now behold the true certainty of the everlasting foundation, and behold your own uncertainty. See the Rock of ages, whereupon the prophets, apostles, and all the saints have been built. See that which indeed is infallible; and cease from man, who is vain, and subject to vanity and error. The church of the Jews did err; the churches of the Gentiles also did err, even in the apostles' days; insomuch as their candlestick was threatened to be removed, and was soon removed; yes, the apostle particularly foretold the saints at Rome concerning the Gentiles, that their standing was by faith; and that if they continued not in God's goodness, they should also be cut off, as the Jews were. Rom. 11:20,22. Now there was not a standing in the faith, but a general backsliding, and falling away from the faith; and then the man of sin was revealed, and Christ and his truth withdrawn; strong delusion, deceit, and false appearances of truth starting up instead thereof. 2 Thess. 2:3,11. For the Lord God, upon the great defection and apostasy of the Gentiles, separates the outward court from his temple, altar, and spiritual worshippers; which temple was his true church, which he reserved for himself, giving the outward court to the Gentiles. Rev. 11:1,2. And then the true church fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God for her; and so the Gentile-Christians could build up their false churches in the cities or palaces where the true church had been built by God, and appeared before. And these false churches may easily become much larger than the true church ever was; for while the Lord built the church by his Spirit, he built only of spiritual stones, 1 Pet. 2:5. adding to it such as he first converted. Acts 2:47. For such alone are fit to worship him in Spirit and truth, and such alone he seeks out to make up his church of, instead of the Jews, whom he had cast off from being a church and people to him. John 4:23. But when man comes to build, he takes in more largely than God allows; he may gather in or force a whole city or nation to become a church, by persuading or compelling them to receive the doctrine and tradition which he prescribes, and be setting up an outward knowledge, policy, and government, according to man, and in the wisdom of man, which the human part will answer to, and be satisfied with. To make this a little more manifest to such as in simplicity of heart desire to know the mind of God in this respect, and the true state of the church since the days of the apostles, consider these things following:



1. God, in those days, sent his true apostles and ministers with the everlasting gospel, which was the word of faith which they preached, to gather men of Jerusalem, Judea, and all nations, into the obedience of the faith, Rom. 1:5. that he might have a spiritual house, a spiritual people, to worship him, instead of those outward worshippers whom he then cast off. John 4:23.

2. That this gathered people in Judea, at Jerusalem, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Coloss, at Philippi, at Rome, etc. were his several churches or congregations; and not the city of Jerusalem, not the city of Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, etc. None of these were churches; but only a select remnant gathered out of these.

3. That the devil, after he had stirred up the Jews every where, and the heathens as much as he could, to cry out against the truth, and such as God had converted to the faith, for heresy and a sect, and to persecute them and it, yet could not prevail that way; then he tried another way, sending his messengers abroad, clothing them as angels of light; teaching them also to preach Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel; and so transforming themselves under this color, secretly to sow the seeds of division, error, and heresy in the church.

4. When this would not do, but these were discovered and judged (by the power and presence of the light of the Spirit in the church) for false Jews, false apostles, deceitful workers, ministers of Satan, etc., Rev. 3:9. and chap. 2:3. then they separate themselves from the church, Jude 19. and make up a body of their own, go out into the world, preach there, gather a company there, get the greater number, and then set upon the church, fight with her, overcome her and her ministry, and get up their own false church and ministry. Thus the synagogue of Satan and his ministry got footing in the world, even in the very same cities and places where the church had newly had dominion before. And now, whereas before there was a church at Jerusalem, a church at Rome, a church at Ephesus, etc., when the synagogue of Satan is set up, and has got the dominion there, the whole city of Jerusalem, or the whole city of Rome, etc. can then become a church. To make this yet more manifest, observe and weigh these things following in the balance of the true sanctuary:

1. The false prophets, the false apostles, which had crept into the church, Jude 4. which strove to seduce the church, 1 John 2:26. these went out from the church, ver.19. and went into the world. 1 John 4:1.

2. When they went out into the world, their intent was to leaven the world with their doctrine, and to gather people after them. They preached to gather people to them, and their doctrine, and form of godliness, as the apostles preached to gather people to God, and his living truth.

3. The world heard them; they hearkened to their doctrine; were willing to be gathered by them, owning their false ministry, and their false church, or synagogue; even as those that were of God hearkened to the apostles, and owned the truth. 1 John 4:6. So that here were now two distinct bodies in cities and places where the gospel had come: a body of the true saints and true apostles; a body of the false apostles and ministers, of the deceitful workers, who showed miracles and wonders, and had all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness on their side. 2 Thess. 2:9,10. Thus there was a great division and breach in the places where the gospel had been preached, and had reigned in power: for he that was of God heard the true apostles, and kept to the true church; but those that were not of God,

but of the worldly spirit, heard the false apostles and false ministers, and so joined to the synagogue of Satan, 1 John 4:6. where Satan had his seat and dwelling, Rev. 2:13. even as Christ dwells and sits in his temple, the church.

4. These false apostles and ministers, with the help of the world, which they had gathered in unto them, joined together against the true church and her seed (as wherever the two contrary spirits and principles appear, they cannot but contend and fight against each other; the one for the faith and truth of the gospel; the other against that which is true, and for a counterfeit of it); so, Rev. 12. there is Michael and his angels fighting on the side of the true church; there is the dragon and his angels fighting for the false church. Now mark who prevails: the true church, Michael and his angels, prevail one way; the false church, the synagogue of Satan, the dragon and his angels, prevail another way.

Question. How does the true church prevail?

Answer. Thus: she keeps all the spiritual, invisible, holy things of God from the paw of the dragon, and of all those false worshippers. The invisible Jew, the invisible life and power, that whereof God had built up his church, is preserved by him; and against his life and Spirit, and his church (which he builds by his Spirit, and preserves in it), all the powers of darkness cannot prevail; but do they all what they can, the man-child is caught up to God; and the church, by God's help, flies from the face of the dragon into the wilderness, where she is fed forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, which is the time of the dragon's prevailing outwardly, by his false church and ministry. Rev. 12.

Question. How does the dragon and false church prevail?

Answer. By putting the man-child and true church to flight; by gaining the church's ground, setting up his synagogue (or false representation of the true church) where the true church had stood before. For the true church being fled into the wilderness, the field was left to him; and there he sets up his false synagogue, in the sight of the world, calling her the true church, and her seed the true catholics; but casting a flood of reproach after the woman, reviling her (who indeed was the true church) for a strumpet, and all her seed for seducers, schismatics, heretics, etc., even such as were not fit to be suffered in the earth, but to be made war with, both by the spiritual and civil sword. Rev. 12:15,17.

Thus then was the victory on each hand: the true church and temple (with the inward power of life) was preserved by God; who caused it, by the wings of his Spirit, to fly out of the sight of false worshippers and imitators, as far as that is from the sight of men in a city, which flies out of the city into a wilderness. And to the other is left the outward court to worship in; the profession, the attire, the garments, the visible observations and practices wherein the church before had appeared, and in which she did once truly and spiritually worship; for the church did acceptably worship in the outward court, before it was measured and divided from the inward temple, and given to the Gentiles. Rev. 11:2.

Question. Now how long was this false church to stand?

Answer. Till the church's coming out of the wilderness in the same Spirit and power wherewith she fled into the wilderness. When Christ comes with the fiery breath of his mouth, and with the brightness of his eternal light, then this false image of the church melts and dissolves away. 2 Thess. 2:8. But till

then she keeps her seat on the beast; on whom she rides, and by virtue of whom she sits upon the waters, even upon peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

Objection. But did not Christ say the gates of hell should not prevail against his church?

Answer. No more they did not: for she had wings of an eagle given her, to fly into the wilderness; into the place prepared of God for her; into which she did fly, and was there fed and preserved, do all the powers of darkness what they could. So that the dragon and his angels prevailed not against the woman; but she was hid from the face of the serpent, and from all his spite and power, who could not come within the bounds of her heaven in the wilderness, but was cast out into the earth, and his angels with him. Rev. 12:8,9. But Christ did not say that the gates of hell should not prevail against her outward estate; but the contrary, in this very prophecy of John, is here declared; namely, that she was so far prevailed against: the true woman, who was "clothed with the sun, and had the moon under her feet, and was crowned with a crown of twelve stars," was to fly away, and give place; and a false woman to start up in her stead; who, with the golden cup of her fornications, was to deceive and bewitch all nations, kindreds, tongues, and languages, forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, which was the full time the church was to remain in the wilderness: but after that time the false church, with antichrist her husband (who all this while sat in the temple), was to be revealed, judged, and destroyed, and the true church return again out of the wilderness into her own place.

Question. Why would God allow his church thus to be prevailed against, thus to be banished and driven out of the building which his Spirit had reared for her, into a wilderness; and a mystery of deceit and falsehood to be set up in her name and stead?

Answer. First, As a just judgment upon the world (who slighted the day of their visitation, and would not come into the vineyard to work), God brings the night upon them, wherein they could not enter into the vineyard, nor work if they would ever so desire. John 9:4.

Secondly, As a just judgment upon such, who, though they could not but own and acknowledge the truth, yet did not love it in their hearts, but loved their unrighteousness, their darkness still; therefore God removes the power of his truth from their eyes into the wilderness; and lets out a power of darkness and deceit upon them, wherewith they were deluded, instead of the truth itself. 2 Thess. 2:10,11.

Thirdly, That such as were approved might be made manifest in the Spirit to be pure gold indeed. They that held the living truth, and could not be drawn aside, with all the pleasures of this world on the one hand, nor with all the dangers from it on the other hand; no, nor yet with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness; these did shine indeed in the light and power of the Spirit, and were a great honor and crown upon the head of their Master.

Fourthly, That darkness might have its day, or hour, or season of manifestation to the full. There has been no day of any dispensation hitherto, but it has had a night coming after it. There was an antichrist to be revealed in the power of darkness, as well as Christ (the eternal light of life) in the living power. Now as long as the true church stood, and as long as the man-child was found dwelling here with her, in the habitation which God had built up for them, the man of sin could not be revealed, but the pure

power of life would soon discover him. Therefore at length, when the full time and season of his discovery came, God removed that into the wilderness which stood in the way; and then he and his spouse, the false church, made a fair show in the world. 2 Thess. 2:7.

Fifthly, That the Lord might make the name of his Son, with the glory of his truth and power, to shine, by overcoming the dragon and this false church, after so long a time of thick darkness, and after such a universal prevalency of the powers and deceits thereof. Was it not a great glory and honor to the Lord, to overcome the heathenish world, and Jewish church and worship, by the power of his truth shining through a poor despicable company of fishermen and mechanics? And will it not be as great (if not a greater) glory to him to overcome the anti-christian world (after it has taken so long and so deep root, and is become so strongly founded) by as poor, contemptible instruments as they were?

Question. But how was it possible that so great a deceit should get up in the world so near the apostles' days, or rather in the very days of the apostles, as this seems to be?

Answer. The false apostles and ministers came "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." 2 Thess. 2:9,10. And the power of miracles in the true apostles might well cease; for the end of miracles was but to testify to the world, to be a sign to the unbelievers. 1 Cor. 14:22. But now their work towards the world was well nigh finished, and judgment was to come upon them for neglecting and despising the day of their visitation. So that the power of deceit was let up in the false apostles, and the power of truth did draw inwards in the true apostles, which made it very easy for deceit to prevail. Besides, the false apostles appeared in a higher appearance than the true apostles did, with more glorious discoveries; so that they could hold forth all that the apostles did (as to the form and outward doctrine), and more too, and could show wonders to confirm what they held forth further. And now how could they choose but prevail over all that kept not close to the anointing, which distinguishes and discerns not by any outward manifestation or appearance, but by the savor of the ointment? Yes, so great was the power of deceit in them, that they drew the third part of the stars of heaven from their place, into this earthly building; so that they fell from the true ministry, and the true church, into this false church and ministry. Rev. 12:4. How many then of the inferior and common sort were then drawn aside!

Question. Has there been no visible true church-state in the world since that time?

Answer. It is impossible for any to build a true church for God, but his own Spirit. And if God removed the church which he built, into the wilderness, it is impossible for all the men of the earth to build up another true one, all that season that God appoints his church to abide in the wilderness. Several sorts of men may attempt it, and each may build up their different images of the thing; but none can recover the thing itself, till the Lord by his Spirit (who first built, and then pulled down) pity the dust of Zion, and raise up the tabernacle of David again. Psal. 102:13. Isa. 2:2. Rev. 21:2,3.

Question. What is the wilderness? Tell us; that the simple-hearted, who long after the truth, may know where to look for, and how to find the true church.

Answer. It is not an outward place, into which the bodies of persons might flee; but a parable to express something inward by. And it is under the feet of all the false worshippers, who are worshipping

in their several buildings, in the outward court. That which they trample upon, keep down, and despise, is the holy city. Rev. 11:2. And the place where the true church all this while has been (and yet in a great part is) is there.

Question. But if God's church has not been in a built state, but has lain desolate in the wilderness ever since antichrist and the false church got up, what has the estate of his people been ever since?

Answer. A state of witnesses. Rev. 11:3. In every age God has had two witnesses (which was a sufficient number to confirm his truth by), to witness to the power of his truth, against the emptiness and corruption of the forms which antichrist had brought in, instead of the living power; which witnesses were clothed with sackcloth, giving forth their testimony with tears; while they of the anti-christian party were rejoicing in the glory, riches, and beauty of their false church, as they could slay, suppress, and keep down the witnesses. Rev. 11:10 and chap. 18:7,9.

Question. What did the dragon do after this victory, after he had got his building up in the outward court (for after he had prevailed to corrupt it, the Lord gave it to his worshippers, the Gentiles, Rev. 11:2. those that made a profession of his truth, but were not true Jews, Rev. 3:9. not of the inward circumcision, Phil. 3:3), and had got the holy city under the feet of his worshippers?

Answer. He pursued his victory against the woman, and the remnant of her seed. As for the woman, he cast a flood of infamy, of reproach after her, that she might never be able to lift up her head again in the power of truth; but what she caused to spring up might still be reviled for falsehood and heresy; and that nothing might henceforth go for truth, but what this false woman should determine to be so: and as touching the remnant of her seed which still remained true to God, keeping his commandments, and having the testimony of Jesus, he applies himself now to wage the war against them. Rev. 12:15,17.

Question. How does he wage the war against them?

Answer. He raises up a beast out of this sea of confusion and wickedness (which ensued upon this great battle and victory on his side), to whom he gave "his power, his seat, and great authority." Rev. 13:2. He had hitherto kept his seat in his synagogue, where he had been slaying the faithful martyrs of Jesus, Rev. 2:13. and had put to death such as loved not their lives unto death. Rev. 12:11. Now he finds it more for his advantage to raise up this beast, and to give his power, seat, and authority to him. This was the Roman power; which, till it was thus depraved and enslaved by Satan, was not a beast, but more noble and just in government than the corrupted Jews were; but now it becomes a beast; and this beast he stirs up against the very name and form of godliness, that he might root out the very appearance of Israel from off the earth: for he got but into the form, to eat out the power; and now, seeing the power is removed, it is for his advantage also to corrupt and destroy the memorial of the true form.

Question. Does he effect this, and prevail likewise against the witnesses?

Answer. Yes; as he effected the other. He overcomes the witnesses after the manner that he had overcome the church (namely, by captivating the outward man, and killing with the sword; but they

overcome him by patience and faith, in their testimony and sufferings. Rev. 13:10); and this in all kindreds, tongues, and nations; and so all the public worship of the earth is given to him. ver. 7,8.

Question. Why would God allow him to do this, seeing he has all power in his hands, and could have restrained him if he had pleased?

Answer. This was greatly needful to the present estate of his people; for by this God raised up that which was good and pure in any, and kept life in it; which otherwise might have perished in the estate of that corrupt form, which then had prevailed, and had gotten dominion outwardly over the true power.

Question. But did not this tend to destroy Satan's kingdom also? For this stroke going against the very name of Christianity, and profession of godliness, might light upon his carnal gossellers likewise.

Answer. They could easily save themselves, turning about to avoid sufferings, and crying, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" Rev. 13:4. Being already one with him in spirit and principle, they would not easily differ from him, and suffer about a form; especially seeing their master's interest and service ran now another way.

Question. What became of this beast?

Answer. The Lord did rend and tear him outwardly by his plagues, famines, pestilences, wars, etc., insomuch as one of his heads was wounded as it were to death; and inwardly, by the innocency and power of his truth appearing in his witnesses, which scorched and tormented the adversary; so that this engine of the dragon grew faint and weary, and unfit for this service, as he stood in this capacity.

Question. What does the dragon do then, to carry on his war against the witnesses?

Answer. After this tempestuous sea was over, he raises up another beast out of the earth, with another kind of power, even with "horns like a lamb," Rev. 13:11. but "he spake as a dragon," exercising all the power of the first beast, ver. 12. so that he is the main in power henceforward; yet he sets up the first beast also, causing "the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." And thus these two join together, to set up an image to be worshipped; and all that will not worship this image, (but the living God alone, in his pure life and Spirit) this latter beast has power to cause to be killed, ver. 15. and such must not so much as buy or sell, who will not receive the "mark of the beast, or his name, or" at least "the number of his name;" to which number the highest growth and perfection in religion and worship, after the wisdom of the flesh, (or man's wisdom) is to be reckoned. ver. 17,18.

Observe now diligently the place of the true church, and her estate, and the estate of her children, all the forty-two months. Her place of habitation is a wilderness; her estate, an estate of widowhood; a city unbuilt, trodden under the feet of the Gentiles; her seed, witnesses, reproached, persecuted, and slain, by the false woman and her seed. Observe likewise the place and estate of the false church and her children; she rears up a glorious building as to the outward; she is a city built and richly adorned; she has a golden cup of doctrine and discipline, of ordinances and worship, to hold forth to the kings

and inhabitants of the earth; in all nations, peoples, kindreds, and tongues; she is arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. Rev. 17:4. and all her daughters (who though they may deny her, yet partake of her spirit, and learn to rear up buildings of churches like her) they also flourish in their degree and measure. None is poor but Zion; none is desolate but God's Jerusalem, but his church, which fled into the wilderness, to abide there all the time of his appointment; and her witnesses are clothed with sackcloth, testifying to God's despised and reproached truth, with mourning and grief of spirit; and not with that fleshly joy, wisdom, and confidence, wherewith Babylon and her merchants vent their wares; but only in the evidence, demonstration, and assurance of the Spirit in their hearts, which all the wise and confident builders and inhabitants of Babylon trample upon and despise.

Now it behoves all to consider what this Babylon, what this woman is, spoken of, Rev. 17. which came in the place of the other woman spoken of, Rev. 12. what this built city is, which the wrath of the Lord will make desolate; what this beast or false prophet is, which appears like a lamb (and shows such miracles to deceive the earth), and yet is fierce and cruel to such as witness for God. Rev. 13:13,14,15. For dreadful are the plagues, woes, vials of wrath, thunders, etc., which God has prepared for her; even the cup of the Lord's indignation without mixture; torment with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. 14:10,11. and chap. 18:8. And who would not fear you, O you King of saints! when you come with your cup of fury and indignation, to empty into the bowels of this woman, which has been so long drunk with the blood of your saints and martyrs. Rev. 17:6. Consider these things, O you Papists! Wait on the Lord in his fear and dread; that he may vouchsafe to make known to you what, and where, this city Babylon is; and that such of you as belong to him may hear his voice calling you out of her, that you may escape this bitter cup. Rev. 18:4

The great judgment is already begun. (This we know, who have tasted of it.) It has begun at God's house, and is spreading further; yes, even over the nations which have disowned you, and yet have learned of you to build up a church and worship after the manner of your whoredoms. These the Lord will judge first; he will plead with the daughters who have disowned their mother, and yet have gone on in her spirit of whoredoms, worshipping the work of their own hands, and administering and magnifying the beauty of the churches which themselves have formed. Now is your time to consider; now is the time for the simple-hearted among you to flee from Babylon, before the wrath of the Lord besiege her. There are three things in general (besides many particulars) which the Protestant nations and churches have learned of you, which will cost them dear, ere they be made willing to part with them.

First, Their taking upon them authority over men's consciences, commanding them what they should believe; which the apostles never did, but said expressly, they had not dominion over the faith of others, but were helpers of their joy. 2 Cor. 1:24. They could not command any to believe their doctrine; but spake in the demonstration of the Spirit, waiting till God opened the heart, 2 Cor. 4:2. and would not have men profess, believe, or practice from their words, but by a feeling of the power. 1 Cor. 2:5. And when men did believe some things, and came into the unity and fellowship of the faith, they did not require them to believe all that the church taught or held forth as true, but waited till God pleased to reveal further. Phil. 3:15. Indeed they could command obedience to the faith: what truths the Spirit of the Lord revealed and taught any man, they could charge him in the name of the Lord to be faithful to. Rom. 1:5. But they knew it was God alone who could ingraft the truth into the heart and

conscience, and also give the increase of it; and so from him alone they expected it; waiting in patience on the stubborn and perverse, till God should please to work upon them, 2 Tim. 2:24,25. and likewise on those that were convinced, and had subjected themselves to the faith, for his increase of it. 1 Cor. 3:6,7.

2dly. Their abridging men's liberty in things wherein God has left them free, and pressing them to a uniformity to things which they themselves confess to be indifferent. Now the apostle (who had the care of all the churches, 2 Cor. 11:28), though he knew certainly how to determine about meats and days, as himself confesses, Rom. 14:14. yet he tells the church at Rome expressly, that Christ was the Lord and Master of every disciple, to whom he must stand or fall herein, ver. 4. and that every man ought to do as he is fully persuaded in his own mind. ver. 5. No he is so far from pressing a necessity of uniformity in such cases, that he presses a necessity of bearing on each hand. ver. 3. So that, in the apostle's judgment, the church has not power to lay commands on the conscience, but must receive the weakest in the faith, ver. 1. leaving him to the liberty of his conscience, and to his subjection to his own Lord and Master; to whom every believer must give an account of what he receives, and of what he obeys and performs. ver. 10-12.

3dly. Their setting up a church-building, government, and discipline, by the magistrate's power. This the apostles no where taught nor practiced. They converted men by the power of the Spirit: they cut down errors, heresies, seducers, and heretics, by the same word; and they found the weapons of their warfare sufficient, 2 Cor. 10:4. they had no need of running to the magistrate. But that church, those doctrines, that government and discipline, which is set up by the magistrate's sword without and against the Spirit, that has need of a carnal sword to defend it against the Spirit, and to cut down God's witnesses (whom he raises up to testify against it) for schismatics and heretics, or its nakedness will soon be made manifest and its ruin approach.

Now when the Lord has judged all the daughters of Babylon for these things, then will he at length begin to plead with their mother, Babylon the Great, who has gone a whoring from the Spirit, and built up a gaudy church without the Spirit, which she has defended by violence and blood, drinking the blood of the saints, who have been inspired by the Spirit to testify against her, Rev. 11:7,8. and has taught all her daughters to do the same; namely, to drink the blood of the witnesses against them, even as she has drunk the blood of the witnesses that have testified against her. And though, because she has had a half-day more given her, after her time seemed to be even expiring, and after judgment and desolation were beginning to enter upon her; though, because of this, she thinks the bitterness of death is past, and she shall now sit as a queen, a lady, a glorious church forever, Rev. 18:7. yet for all this is she come again into God's remembrance. Rev. 16:19, and she shall see widowhood, and be cast into a bed of torment, and all her children into great tribulation with her; and she shall be desolate, and naked, and drink of the cup, and not repent that she might escape it. Rev. 16:11. 9:20,21. This is her portion, from the hand of the Lord. Oh! happy is he whose eyes the Lord shall open, to flee out of her for life! For the Lamb is arisen to make war, and his spouse is making herself ready for his pure bed of life, and his anger is kindled against all the kings and powers of the earth that stand in his way; and though they fight ever so resolutely against him and his meek ones, they shall not prevail, but the Lamb will overcome all; for he is "King of kings, and Lord of lords," and they that are with him in this battle of his Spirit, are "Called, and Chosen, and Faithful." Rev. 17:4. And though this woman (the false church, in her various dresses) is so strong, every where getting the earthly powers and authorities on



her side, that now it may be said concerning this beast, in the several appearances of it, as was concerning the former; "Who is able to make war with her?" yet there is an invisible power stronger than she, who will call her to judgment, Rev. 18:8. and make her give an account of all the saints' blood which she has drunk herself, and which she has taught her daughters to drink. And "salvation, glory, honor, and power," shall be ascribed to the Lord, for his righteous and powerful judging of her. Rev. 19:1,2. And he that has any glimmering of this in the eternal light of the Lord's pure, ever-living Spirit, let him even now say, "Hallelujah" to him who is "arisen out of his holy habitation," and has already begun this work, who will not fail to perfect it. Amen.

### **SOMETHING CONCERNING THE GROUND OF ERROR, AND THE WAY TO TRUTH AND UNITY; FOR THE SAKE OF SUCH AS ARE MORE SPIRITUAL**

THERE is no way to become an heir of the kingdom of God, but 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, but by turning to the Spirit which begets, standing and keeping upright in that which is begotten, and taking heed of the fleshly wisdom, which 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 prevail, there is suddenly a departing from the living God, and a running a whoring after the inventions of the fleshly wisdom, which appears in the likeness of the true wisdom, that it might the 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 a great body of death, deceit, darkness, power, and the wisdom of the flesh, standing; and all 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 abiding and preservation in the truth is difficult, and alone maintained by that power which at first begat.

Now the power preserves through keeping out of the sensual and reasoning part (where the corrupt one has his lodging), in that poor, low, little, childish 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; which 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 deal is to be brought down, before they can be truly reached and convinced by the foolish and weak things which God chooses to effect his great works by! 1 Cor.1:27,28. What a work has God 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 if they be convinced at any time, what an easy and natural return unto them does their own wisdom find, by some subtle device or other, to draw them back from the plainness and singleness of the truth, into a holding it in the wisdom and subtlety of the understanding part, where the simplicity is soon lost. 2 Cor. 11:3.

In the Spirit which begets, and in the truth which is begotten by it, is the true unity. Feeling that in one another, is that which unites us to one another. Every one keeping to that in his own particular, is kept

to that which unites; and that is kept alive in him which is to be united; but 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, strives to set up a false image of unity, and blames 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; as that which is run a whoring from the Spirit, into an image of the fleshly wisdom's forming, 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. We blame you for departing from the living principle, wherein our unity with you formerly stood, and wherein alone we can again unite with you; and not in such things as uphold a fleshly and false image of the true unity.

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; that God may be all in you, and his eternal habitation be raised up in you, and perfected, and you swallowed up and comprehended in it forever. Oh, what a work has 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! There have been many dispensations of, but there is but one living truth; but one substance; but one arm of salvation. And he that stumbles at the thing itself, how can he be saved by it? It is easy misunderstanding a former dispensation, reading it in the letter; and so to miss of the salvation hoped for by it.

The Jews owned the Messiah (according to the Scriptures, as they thought), but rejected him in the way he came to save them in. Now if Christians have gathered such a kind of knowledge from the letter of the Scriptures as they 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; rebelling against his living ministry, and the pure power and demonstration of his Spirit, because it appears weak and low; because it does not appear the same thing to them which they expect to be saved by, according to their apprehensions of the Scriptures? Thus reading the Scriptures in another spirit and wisdom than that which wrote them, they must needs conclude and gather another thing from them than what is written in them; and so make that a means to them of erring from the life, which was written to testify of, and point to, the living principle from which life and salvation springs, and where alone it is to be had.

# **AN EPISTLE TO ALL SUCH AS OBSERVE**

## **THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK**

### **FOR THE SABBATH OF THE LORD**

FRIENDS,

In true love to your souls, and in the fear of the Lord, I have a few things to lay before you, that the simplicity in you may not be deceived, and you err from the way of life, while you may be eagerly seeking and pressing towards it: for notwithstanding that, if with the wrong eye you be searching into Scripture, you must needs mis-read, mis-understand, and mis-practice; and so thereby will still be running further and further from God, even while you think you are drawing nigher towards him. Be persuaded, therefore, seriously to consider (out of the wisdom from which God hides, in the babish simplicity of his begetting, where the true life springs) these few things following.

1. That the whole law of Moses (the ten words, as well as the institutions about sacrifices and worship) was added because of transgression. Gal. 3:19.
2. That the whole law (the ten words, as well as the sacrifices) was representations, figures, or shadows, of something relating to Christ, the seed; subservient 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, or the ten words, did no more make perfect, than the other shadows or sacrifices did, but with them made way for the better hope, towards which they were to lead their scholar, or disciple, as school-master.
3. That the whole dispensation of the law was given to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. Rom. 9:4. And so not any thing there written binds the Gentiles (as there written, but only the Jews. God had another way of making his mind known to the Gentiles. Rom. 1:19—2:15. According to which he would judge them. ver. 12. And not by the law written, which was given to the Jews, which spake not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews, who were under it. Rom. 3:19.
4. That the duration of this dispensation of Moses' law in the letter, was till Christ, the seed, should come and fulfill it. Gal. 3:19. and 24,25. Moses' family, with all the laws thereof, were to prepare for Christ, the seed, and to give way to him when he came; for when that dispensation, which was figured out, is come; then that dispensation which did figure it out, 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. Psal. 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 (as well of the ten commandments as of the sacrifices) puts an end to that dispensation wholly; so that henceforth both Jews and Gentiles are to come to him, to hear his voice; "This is my beloved Son, hear him." And Moses foretold, that when that prophet came, he was to

be heard in all things; whose whole ministration was but to figure out what the Son was afterwards to fulfill in Spirit, Heb. 3:5. who would be faithful to give forth the entire law and substance of life to his house or family of believers, as Moses was faithful to give the entire shadow to his house or family, of that nation of the Jews. ver. 6. So that here, in the gospel, Christ being come, the new covenant and law in the Spirit takes place, and not the old covenant or law in the letter. And this law is more inward, more full, more close, more spiritual, and more lasting, than the ministration of Moses' law to them of old time was. Gal. 3:25, etc. 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 tables of stone were a representation or figure of the fleshly tables of the heart, wherein the new law of the covenant of life is written.

The writing of the law of commandments in the tables 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 tables was a figure of the inward writing in the inward tables.

The law itself of commandments, which was written in those tables, was a figure of the law of life which is to be written in these tables.

And this law thus received, thus written, 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 hand-writing of ordinances against the Jews: for he that was guilty of one, was guilty of all, and so upon every transgression had the force and strength of the whole law against him. And whosoever now runs back to the law in the letter, to take up any command as held forth in it, and so making himself a debtor thereto, will be found a breaker thereof in spirit, even one that has more gods than the Lord, a maker of images, or likenesses of things in heaven, or things in earth, if not of both; 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 feeling the living power thereof; nor can 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; all the sabbaths of the law were but signs of it, having but a significative or representative holiness; but the day of redemption which the Lord has made, Psa. 118:24 (in which his redeemed rejoice, and rest to him) that has the true holiness. This was it which came by Christ, the other came by Moses. John 1:17. Moses' family or children were to keep that 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 to worship the Father in it, in the Spirit and in the truth, on the mountain of his holiness, John 4:23. whereof 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; as love, that comprehends the whole of it; so does fear; there is the whole wisdom and course of the life

comprehended also; or thus, "You shall not lust," (thus it was administered to Paul, Rom. 7.) or you shall "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 out of the love, out of the fear; a lust of the fleshly spirit, a transgression of the sabbath, or spiritual rest to God; out of the light, and out 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, Rom. 10:6. by the hearing whereof is the justification, and not by a bare believing that Christ's blood was shed; for it is the virtue of the blood which saves; which virtue is in the living word, and is felt and received in hearing, believing, and obeying that word, thereby bringing 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, and that slain in you which cannot bear the straitness thereof, and with which there is no erring.

From a friend to your eternal peace,

ISAAC PENINGTON the Younger.

**THE NEW COVENANT OF THE GOSPEL  
DISTINGUISHED FROM  
THE OLD COVENANT OF THE LAW**

**AND THE**

**REST OR SABBATH OF BELIEVERS, FROM THE REST OR SABBATH OF THE JEWS;  
WHICH DIFFER AS MUCH FROM EACH OTHER AS THE SIGN AND SHADOW DOTH  
FROM THE THING SIGNIFIED AND SHADOWED OUT**

**IN ANSWER TO**

**SOME QUERIES OF W. SALTER'S, TENDING TO ENFORCE UPON CHRISTIANS THE  
OBSERVATION OF THE JEWISH SABBATH, WHICH WAS GIVEN UNDER THE LAW  
TO THE JEWS FOR A SIGN**

**AS ALSO TO**

**Some other QUERIES sent in writing, upon occasion of an EPISTLE directed to all such as  
observe the Seventh Day of the week for a Sabbath, now under the GOSPEL. As likewise some  
LETTERS to the same purpose**

**WITH A BRIEF EXPLICATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE *SIX DAYS' LABOR, AND  
SEVENTH DAY'S SABBATH***

**Whereto are added**

**Some CONSIDERATIONS propounded to the JEWS, tending towards their Conversion  
to that which is the Life and Spirit of the Law**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**[1660]**

*We which have believed do enter into Rest. Heb. 4:3*

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or  
sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is Christ. Col. 2:16,17*

## PREFACE

The apostle Paul says, that God had made them "able ministers of the New Testament, 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 of a better state to come, than the days and state under the law were; it first pleased God to send the forerunner John the Baptist, in the spirit and power of Elias, to prepare the way for the King and his kingdom; and then to send the King himself, in the fulness of his spirit, to gather disciples to him, and to furnish them with a competent measure of the same Spirit, to raise up a spiritual seed to him, in whom he would set up his kingdom, dwelling, walking, and reigning there; causing his light to shine from there round about the earth, as from his holy city, founded upon his holy hill of Zion.

Now those disciples or ministers whom he chose to raise up this holy seed unto him, he made fit and able to minister his new covenant, by which it was to be raised; yes, 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; no, because of the transgressing nature, made the offense abound, and so increased death upon them), but in the quickening Spirit, which 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. So that 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 principle, and ministered life to it through the Spirit. Gal. 3:5. And such as were born of this living principle, 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 proper for the Jews in their day) after the manner of the former dispensation, but to keep in the living principle, 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 wait for assistance from the Spirit, by which they might be kept in the faith of, and made obedient to, the law. 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; not to gather outward rules out of the letter, from what is written or spoken, but to keep to the living principle, and feel refreshment to that, in reading or hearing what is written or spoken by the Spirit. And thus the Scriptures being read, or any one speaking from God being heard, it is mingled with faith, and becomes profitable, feeding and refreshing the young, tender plant, the living principle, and causing it to grow up into God: whereas whatever is understood, or received, or held out of this, feeds but the earthly, and does but thicken the veil over the living seed; to which the kingdom belongs, and to which the gospel is sent to be preached, to raise it, that it might live and thrive, and grow up into its stature, that so it might inherit.

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand," said John the Baptist. Mat. 3:2. "It is come unto you," said Christ, Mat. 12:28. 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 that way you look for it; namely, by the manifestation of an outward glorious king, to reign outwardly in the commonwealth of the outward Israel; but 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 as well as the rest (though less than them all), and did sometimes cast some glimmerings of light, and of its shining in the darkness, though the darkness could not comprehend it. This seed was also likened 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 principle of light; from his great power of death, to this little, weak thing of God; wherein the eternal power and godhead is made manifest, as 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 which it is to 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 about the letter, to find out the mind of God, and are still unsatisfied concerning it, and even drowned in fleshly imaginations and contentions about it! They seek to have that satisfied which is not to be satisfied: they seek to have that know which is not to know: they offer to God the service, faith, and obedience of that which he will not accept; and keep that from him which he calls for. They seek for the Spirit in the letter, according to the manner of the law; but wait not to feel it in the seed, quickening the seed, raising up the seed, and dwelling in the seed, where Christ and his apostles directed to wait for it. They look for that knowledge, that faith, that life, that Spirit, from words written, which the apostle preached was to be waited for 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 understanding and apprehensions of the letter, every sort being very confident concerning their own apprehensions that they are the right; and thus they wander from the city of the living God, and from the living knowledge; building up images, some outwardly, some in their minds; some more gross, some more refined; but all, more or less, who are not acquainted with the living knowledge and truths of God, but have gathered apprehensions with the wrong tool from the letter, have set up something else instead of the true life and power (the knowledge of the true God, which is life eternal), the knowledge of the true Christ (whom no man can indeed call Lord, but by the Spirit), the knowledge of the everlasting gospel (which alone is read in the Spirit), the knowledge of the Spirit (which alone is read in the seed). These are strange things to the several generations of the Christians of this age, who commonly know no more of them, than according to the apprehensions they have taken in concerning them; even from that wisdom and understanding which has not a capacity in it to receive them, but must be destroyed before these things can be understood aright. 1 Cor. 1:19. Oh that you could read in the eternal light of life! O Christians, Christians! Oh that you could see how your understandings and knowledge from the letter stand as much in your way, as ever the Jews' did in theirs; and 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, without the leadings of the eternal light, has nestled itself in the letter, got a seat of wisdom and knowledge there, raised up a building from there, either of inward or outward worship, will be dissettled and driven from there, even by that very Spirit which gave forth the letter. And when this is done, and God's Spirit again opens the letter, oh, how sweet, how profitable, how clear, how refreshing will it be, being read in the light of the Spirit, and in the faith which is in Christ Jesus, which is begotten in the heart by the word



of faith, which is nigh there. From that light, from that spring (as the Lord pleases to open, enlarge, and fill the vessel), all the words of the holy men of God came; and in that alone they have their sweetness, freshness, virtue, and fulness; but how to read the words outwardly written, keeping to that, and understanding them in that (and how to 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), is a mystery to them who have not been turned inward to this word, nor have known or heard his voice. 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, whose eye-salve was bought of the true Spirit, whose raiment is right spun; but exceeding hard will it go with that man whom the Lord (when he comes to search him) shall not find a right inward Jew, as he took himself to be, nor truly circumcised by the Lord's eternal Spirit with the light thereof, but only by such a circumcising-knife as he himself had formed out of the letter of the Scriptures. This is the great misery of Christians; the veil lies over their hearts, even the same veil which covered the letter of Moses from the Jews: and they are groping after the mind of God in the letter; but the life is hid from them, even as it was from the Jews: and because they also say they see, and that they have the life and the Spirit, therefore the veil remains, and the caul of iniquity surrounds them, so that they cannot see into that which makes free from it, but remain yet in captivity and bondage to the enemy.

## **THE NEW COVENANT OF THE GOSPEL**

### **DISTINGUISHED FROM**

## **THE OLD COVENANT OF THE LAW**

### **SOME QUERIES OF W. SALTER'S, TENDING TO ENFORCE UPON CHRISTIANS THE OBSERVATION OF THE JEWISH SABBATH, ANSWERED**

Query 1. WHETHER the fourth commandment, expressed Exod. 20. be not moral and perpetual, as well as the other nine be, yes or no?

Answer. That 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 to make way for that covenant, priesthood, lawgiver, and law, which were to be perpetual. That law, so given forth, made nothing perfect; but was a continual handwriting of ordinances against the Jews; and the very salvation of the Jews was by another covenant, and by the laws thereof, Deut. 30:11. by which covenant, and by which law, they might be made perfect, and come to the better hope. Which other covenant is the covenant of grace, or the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or the Word which is nigh in the mouth, and in the heart, and speaks life to them that can hear and believe the joyful sound of it.

Now that this former covenant was not to abide, but to give place to the other, see Heb. viii, which

treats of the new covenant: for God's speaking of a new covenant imports that he himself has made the first old. ver. 13. It had a long continuance among that people of the Jews; but now against the coming of Christ, who was to be Mediator of a better covenant, ver. 6. even a new covenant, ver. 8. as it had been long decaying, and waxing old, so now it was ready to vanish away, as ver. 13.

And indeed it was necessary it should pass away; for it was not faultless. How, not faultless! Was there any sin in the holy law and ministration of God by Moses? Can there any just blame be found in any thing that proceeded from the Lord? No, surely the ministration of Moses was holy, and without blame; but it was weak, through the flesh, Rom. 8:3. and therefore God would lay that aside, so far as it was weak, and suited to the weakness of a fleshly people, and bring, instead thereof, a ministration of the law in the Spirit, which should be lively and powerful and effectual in the spirits of his people.

That which God aimed at in a covenant, was to keep him and his people together. Now this covenant was weak on the people's part; they continued not in it, and so, according to that covenant, God disregarded them. ver. 9. Now God finding this covenant not able to effect his purpose of love towards his people, he finds fault with it, bringing forth another, or second, which this gives place to. ver. 7. And this other covenant, or new covenant, is not according to that. How not according to that? Why this: it was not written outwardly, as that 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, every one 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; not as it was given at Mount Sinai, (which ministration was to the children of the old covenant) but as it goes forth out of Zion, and from the "Jerusalem which is above," which is the mother of all the children of the covenant, and nourishes them, not with the law of Moses, but with the milk of her own breasts.

Now if any think to restrain this to the types and shadows of the law, they therein err: for the main covenant was the law of commandments, which they still broke, worshipping other gods, making images and likenesses, taking his name in vain, profaning his sabbaths, and so of the rest. It is true, the first covenant had a worldly sanctuary, a tabernacle wherein was the candlestick, etc., but the chief matter of the covenant was the ten words; therefore the tables wherein it was written were called the tables of the covenant, or the tables wherein the covenant was contained. Heb. 9:4. Yes, the ten words are expressly called the covenant itself. Deut. 4:13. Observe therefore diligently these few things following 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, Against Christ's coming God provides a new covenant, a better covenant for him to be Mediator of; which covenant was not outward, like the former, but inward, put in the mind, writ in the heart. As the people was 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 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 but 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; how much less Moses. But taking the whole ministration of Moses in the spirit, not only the ten commandments, but all the sacrifices and other types also, here they are owned 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 any thing of the ten words a shadow? Do they not all command abiding things?

Answer. Moses' whose ministration (as it stood in the letter without) was but a shadow of the fulness and perfection of that ministry of the Spirit which was to come, and to be set up by the Son in his house. Heb. 3:5,6. Moses' people, but a shadow of the spiritual people; Moses' priests and sacrifices, but a shadow of the spiritual priests and sacrifices; Moses' law in the letter ministered from Mount Sinai, 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 him, but a shadow of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. John 1:17. Of whose fulness every believer receives a portion of the same grace, "even grace for grace;" ver. 16 which grace is to be his teacher, both of what he should deny and turn from, and how he should live and carry himself both towards God and man. Tit. 2:11,12. Look particularly on the commandments, and see if there will not appear something of a shadow in them.

The first commandment to that people, "That they should have none other gods (like the heathen) but him only whose powerful arm had brought them out of Egypt." This is a shadow of the subjection of the spiritual Israel singly in Spirit to the Lord of spirits, who by his mighty arm redeemed them out of spiritual Egypt. Now must they bow to other lords no more, Isai. 26:13. as they did bow in the land of Egypt (Oh, who can read this!), but bow alone at the name of Jesus, and be subject to the arm of his power in their spirits alone forever.

The second commandment, "That they should not make any images or likenesses of things in heaven or earth, or bow down to them, is a shadow of what God requires of spiritual Israel in the inward, where all likenesses, inventions, imitations, resemblances of what they have seen in the Spirit above, or beneath in the earthly nature, they must not make themselves, nor bow to such as any others make.

And they must not "take the name (of the Lord their Redeemer) in vain," pretending to the living power when it manifests not itself in them; pretending to meet in the living name, and to worship in the Spirit, when they are gone a whoring from it, and become strangers to it. What should I mention any more? It is easy to observe how the other commandments were shadows of the inward innocency 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 may any of these laws be broken? If they may not be broken, then they are perpetual.

Answer. The reason why they may not be broken is not because that the dispensation of them is still in force, but because the dispensation of the law of the Spirit comprehends all the righteousness of Moses' law: and the end of Christ's dissolving that covenant was not that any might have liberty to do any thing which is there manifested to be unrighteous; but that the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in them who receive his law in the Spirit, which never could be fulfilled by receiving of Moses' law in the letter. Rom. 8:4. And mark this diligently, you that have been exercised in the Spirit towards God: the law of sin is nearer to us than any law of the letter can come; the covenant of death and hell (with the laws thereof) is written within by the finger of Satan; and that which blots them out must be 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 not as it was given in the letter to the Jews: for so it was a shadow, making nothing perfect: but making way for the better hope, for the covenant established upon better promises, for the inward law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus: which effects that in the spirits of his 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 drove at in a shadow. The law is fulfilled in this one word *love*; but that love must be received from God which fulfills the law. A man may strive to love abundantly, and strive to obey in love, and yet fall short of the covenant; but the Lord must circumcise the heart before that love can spring up which fulfills the law. Deut. 30:6.

Objection. But does not the Apostle Paul say, that by the law is the knowledge of sin; and that he had not known lust, except the law had said, "You shall not covet;" plainly referring to the tenth commandment, which says, "You shall not covet."

Answer. By the law outwardly was the knowledge of sin outwardly to the people of the Jews; by the law inwardly is the knowledge of sin inwardly to the spirits of disciples. Now a little consider and wait on the Lord, to know what administration of the law it was that Paul knew sin by; whether it was by Moses' administration of the law in the letter, or by Christ's ministration of his law to him in the Spirit. It is rendered in our last translation, "You shall not covet;" but it might more properly be rendered, "You shall not lust:" for if ἐπιθυμία be properly rendered *lust*, then Οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις may as properly be rendered, "You shall not lust." And he that has received the administration of the law in the Spirit, knows it thus to issue forth from the Word of life into his spirit. It discovers the lusts and affections of the flesh, which draw from the yoke and subjection to the Spirit; and then, by a command from the living Spirit, it hedges up the way after the other lovers, saying, "You shall not lust." And as the law of the flesh arises, kindling desires after vanity, and after fleshly ease and delight; so the law of the Spirit arises in the inner man, forbidding, pricking, stopping, and limiting that which would be at liberty out of the life and purity of the holy law. And here begin the bitter fights and terrible battles and conflicts between the two seeds, wherein all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell are engaged.

Now because this interpretation of Paul's words may seem strange and uncouth to persons who have drunk in another apprehension, and have taken it for granted that Paul there refers to the tenth commandment, consider the place yet further, and perhaps the Lord may please to open it to you from the very letter, even as he has opened it to others immediately by his Spirit, by causing them to feel the thing which Paul felt, and to receive the law as he received it.

Paul (in that seventh of the Romans) speaks of three states which he had known.

First, A state of life before the law: "I was alive without the law once." ver. 9.

Secondly, A state of death after the commandment came: then sins revived, and he died. When the word of life came with its living commandment to set upon sin indeed, then sin would dally no longer; it would no longer lie as dead, and let Paul live in his zeal and worship as he had done before; but it slew him, it showed its power in him, sometimes deceiving him, and sometimes forcing him from that which was holy, spiritual, just, and good, and to that which was unholy; insomuch as he did do what he hated, and could not do what he loved; and found himself a wretched man, and in miserable captivity, because of the body of death and the law of sin in his members. ver. 23,24.

Thirdly, A state of life, after the commandment had done its work in thoroughly slaying of him; when that was removed which the law came against, then he was married to another husband, then he could bring forth fruit unto God; Rom. 7:4. then he could walk freely with God, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, chap. 8:4. and rejoice in the life and the peace, instead of roaring out because of the death, which came from the carnal mind. ver. 5.

Now when was the time when Paul "was alive without the law"? Was it not when he was righteous, when he was whole? Then he had no need of the physician, then he had not received the wound, even the terrible wound which Christ then gives the soul when he calls to it by his Spirit, and gives forth the commandment, "You shall not lust." When he had "confidence in the flesh," being circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Phil. 3:4,5,6. Here was a living man; and his exact receiving the ministration of the law in the letter was part of his life; yes, but he had not received the commandment yet that slew him. Paul was alive yet, and could flourish in the freshness of his life, zeal, and abundant knowledge under this administration of the law: but when God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shined in his heart; when God began the work of the new creation in him by his living light; when the commandment came fresh from the Spirit (the commandment which was ordained to life, Rom. 7:10. which the ministration of the law in the letter was not, no not to the Jews, but another. Deut. 30:14,15), then Paul began to feel the sting of death, and the power of sin, which now rose up in its strength to retain one of its subjects, and to keep the stronger man than he from dispossessing him, if he could. And now how was poor Paul rent and torn, and harassed by the enemy, and made to see and feel his miserable captivity, until he had passed through the death, and was redeemed from under sin, and consequently from under this bitter administration of the Spirit, by his holy, pure, and severe law against sin! For the man being dead, the law has no force against the seed, nor against that which is one with and lives in the seed: and this it is he speaks to the Romans concerning, who also were acquainted with the ministration of the law, as ver. 1. of the 7th chap. Now is it not very manifest that

Paul knew not sin spiritually by the ministration of the law in the letter, but was alive without it, until he felt the ministry of it from Christ in the Spirit? And that soon struck at his life, and by degrees slew it, killing the body of sin in him, with its members, and so preparing him for the marriage to another husband.

Objection. But by this then a man is not only freed from the law of the letter, but also from the law of the Spirit: for if this law be ministered to him till death pass upon him, and till he be married to Christ, then after death is passed upon him, and he is baptized into death, and risen with Christ, and married to him, the law passes away likewise.

Answer. There is a double ministration of the law of the Spirit; a sharp ministration against sin, and a sweet ministration in the renewed Spirit. The ministration against sin passes away, as the sin is wrought out; but then the sweet, spiritual current and law of its holy and pure life in the renewed Spirit is more vigorous and full. So that the law of the Spirit remains forever; but its convictions, its reproofs, its chastisements towards the worldly part, diminish and pass away as the worldly part is wasted; and its sweet, comforting presence, pure peace, fresh joy and life, increase as the new man grows and flourishes.

Query 2. Whether the scope and drift of that fourth precept be not to persuade us to lay by the works of our calling one day in seven, that we may on that day wholly give up ourselves to wait on the Lord, in the performance of duties of piety and mercy, for our attaining of, and growing in, sanctification and holiness?

Answer. The scope and drift 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), the day and rest of the Spirit being known, the sign is at an end, and the thing signified takes place. So that the rest is now in Christ, through the faith, by his Spirit, where the worship is. And this in the gospel comprehends the time of worship, the place of worship, and the worship itself (which are spiritual), where, in substance, all is known, enjoyed, and solemnized, which was figured out 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 (which rest the Lord of the sabbath was to give, and lead the spirits of his people into), pass away? Exod. 31:13.

Query 3. Whether the fourth precept do not as strictly bind us to keep holy the seventh day of or from the creation, as it binds us to the observation of a seventh day?

Answer. The fourth commandment did not require the observation of a seventh day in general; but of a seventh day in particular, of those of whom it required it: for what the law required, it required of those who were under the law, and not of others. Rom. 3:19.

Query 4. If the seventh day's sabbath be not moral and perpetual, then how comes it to pass that it was instituted or appointed from the first creation, when men by guilt stood in no need of a Savior, nor yet of such a ceremony; Gen. 2:3.

Answer. That it was instituted or appointed from the first creation, or that God intended to require of man the observation of it had he abode in innocency, is not manifest in the Scriptures; but that God did then bless and sanctify it (in relation to the service he had for it), that is expressed in scripture. Gen. 2:2,3. And that this was one end for which he did sanctify it, namely, that it might be for a sign unto that people of the Jews (which were the people he chose to set up his signs and figures of the invisible things among), the scripture also testifies. Exod. 20:11. but what further meaning there is in it, and what relation it has to all the redeemed of the Lord, in whom God brings about the new creation, with the rest thereof (as he did the old), it is better to wait to know and feel in the Spirit, than to be prying into with the curious, searching, fleshly understanding.

Query 5. If the seventh day's sabbath be not moral, and belonging both to Jews and Gentiles, then how comes it to pass that it was given to all men in Adam, when there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles and was observed by command from the beginning, as appears by comparing together Gen. 2:3. and Exod. 16:18, to 31.

Answer. That it was given to Adam in innocency, or to all men in Adam, I do not find, nor do these places quoted make it manifest; but its being practiced before the giving of the law does not prove its perpetuity, or that it was not given for a sign: for circumcision was instituted and observed long before the giving of the law, Gen. 17. and sacrificing long before that, Gen. 4. both which were signs of the inward, and not perpetual as to the outward observation of them.

Query 6. If when our Lord Jesus says, (Mat. 5:18) that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle should in no wise pass from the law;" if he there meant not the law of the ten commandments, expressed in Exodus xx, then what law did he mean?

Answer. By the law is meant the whole ministration of Moses; as by the prophets (ver. 17), the whole ministration of the prophets: and that it is not to be restrained to the ten commandments, is manifest by the instances which Christ gives, more of which relate to other parts of the law than to the commandments: for there are but two instances out of the ten commandments; but there are four instances out of other parts of the law, as may be seen, ver. 31. 33. 38. and 43. of that chapter. So that Christ does not only take in the ten commandments, but he takes in the rest of Moses' ministry in the Spirit, not one jot or tittle whereof is to pass till it be all fulfilled; but was to stand in the letter to the Jews till full season, and then in the Spirit till all be finished there also.

"The law and the prophets were until John;" from that time the kingdom of God began to be preached, Luke 16:16. and both the law, prophets, and John himself were to decrease, and Christ and his kingdom to increase. Christ, in this fifth of Matthew, had been preaching the kingdom, declaring to whom it appertained, and the blessedness of such. Now this his manner of preaching might seem to derogate from the law of Moses, and from the prophets, whose doctrine and dispensation hereby he might seem to destroy: but Christ takes away the occasion of such a misapprehension, bidding them not think he came to destroy the law, or the prophets: for he was not come for that end, but to fulfill. Wherein he 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 it, Luke 16:17); till the heaven and earth of the Jews passed away. Heb. 12:27, 28.

Secondly, He takes in the substance of it into his own ministration, 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; but he does not give it out in full, but only gives a taste to his disciples how straitly 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 yet further: Christ does not give out the letter for his law, as it was delivered by Moses; but requires something of his disciples which comprehends the letter. As now when he administers the law against revenge, from which murder proceeds, he does not say, "You shall not kill," as Moses had said to them of old time; but says, You shall not be angry without a cause, nor give your brother any provoking language. ver. 22. Nor does he say, "You shall not commit adultery;" but, You shall not let out a lustful look, nor let in a lustful thought. ver. 28.

And had he 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 so much as any sticks gathered to make a fire with), nor no burden borne; but the man-servant, the maid-servant, the ox, the ass, and 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 his, kings and priests to God! who being once baptized into his death, know also his resurrection and reign.

Objection. But all the other commandments are to be kept according to the letter; for although it should prove so, that believers are not bound to observe them by virtue of Moses' ministration in the letter, but by virtue of the ministration of the Spirit, yet the commandments themselves are kept; but take away the outward observation of the sabbath, and this commandment has no fulfilling at all according to the letter.

Answer. This arises from the different nature of the thing: for the other commandments require or forbid that which is either good or evil in its own nature; but this is but good or evil by institution or command. To keep a day, or not to keep a day, is not good or evil in itself, but as it is commanded, or forbidden, or left at liberty in the Lord, and according as it is done or forborne by him who received the command or prohibition, or is let into the liberty of the gospel. Rom. 14:6. So that if the nature of the thing required in this commandment, had been alike with the nature of the things required or forbidden in the other commandments, it would have been as durable after the dissolution of that covenant, as the other things therein contained were; which vanish not in themselves upon the dissolution of that covenant, but only pass into a higher way of dispensation, where they retain their full virtue and strength, even according to the letter, though not by virtue of the administration of the letter; another higher and fuller administration of a better covenant challenging and taking its own place.

Query 7. If the seventh day's sabbath be not moral, but an abrogated ceremony, now since the death of Christ; then wherefore should our Savior instruct his beloved apostles, that they must instruct the Christian churches to pray, Mat. 24:20. that they might not flee on the sabbath, knowing that their



flight would fall out more than thirty years after his death?

Answer. Great was the hardship the Jews underwent in the siege of Jerusalem, by that apprehension of theirs that they ought not to do any work (not so much as of defending themselves) on the sabbath; which hardship such disciples of Christ among the Jews, as could not easily be drawn off from the law and Jewish observations, but still were for circumcision, and keeping of an outward sabbath, might be liable to. Now Christ, and the apostles after him, were not hasty to withdraw them from such things, but for a time bore with them therein; insomuch that Paul circumcised Timothy, and became to the Jews as a Jew; and to them that were under the law, as under the law himself also. But the strength of the query seems to lie in this, *That it should bear the name of sabbath from Christ's own mouth, in relation to something which should happen on it more than thirty years after it should cease to be sabbath.* To which my answer is plain, that that may as well bear the name of sabbath, as Jerusalem, or the temple, bear the name of the holy place, ver. 15. of the same chap. For Jerusalem and the temple did as much cease to be the holy place above thirty years after those words were spoken, as the Jewish sabbath could cease to be the sabbath.

Now for the sakes of such as have been truly exercised in their spirits by the Spirit of the Lord (and have felt the powerful work of his grace, and a building raised up by him), and may yet be further exercised, I shall add this. Jerusalem was a type of an inward building in the spirits of God's people; both in its rearing up, in its situation, in its standing, in God's dealing with it all the time of its standing; and lastly, in its downfall and utter desolation. There is an appearance and building of God in the spirits of his people, which is to give way to, and be swallowed up in, a fuller and higher appearance. But the fleshly spirit, getting into this building, will not give way to the further and more inward and spiritual appearance of the Spirit, but will have the first building stand as the building, and will entertain no further appearance of God, than as it can comprehend it, subject it, and afford it a place in the first building. Hereupon God distresses Ariel, even the city which David built (saying within his heart; surely "that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted will I pluck up, even this whole land, so he causes the overflowing scourge to pass, even over your whole land, O Emanuel"). Now when the enemy enters within the holy city, and within the holy temple, it is time to flee, and exceeding great distress will befall that disciple, whose flight is either in the winter or on the sabbath day. Do not imagine at this; but if the Lord open it not at present, wait his season; for the thing is true and sealed, both by the openings of the light eternal, and by sensible exercises and experiences from that light.

Thus I have answered such of the queries as concern the seventh day's sabbath. Such as seem to argue the unwarrantableness of observing the first day of the week for a sabbath, I leave to those to whom they are tendered (and of whom an answer seems so conscientiously and zealously desired, as I do not see how it can be reasonably neglected or denied), that by weighty evidence of Scripture he may be reduced, if he has erred; but if not, but it be truth which he has therein held forth, the Lord may be honored in men's bowing and subjecting to every truth of his, by what instruments soever it pleases him to make it manifest.

## SOME QUERIES

### SENT IN WRITING, (UPON OCCASION OF AN EPISTLE DIRECTED TO ALL SUCH AS OBSERVE THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK FOR A SABBATH)

#### ANSWERED

Query 1. If the whole law of Moses, the law of the ten commandments, as well as the law of sacrifices, were both added upon one and the same account for transgressions; then why does the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures lay forth such an antiphithical use of them (I suppose he means antitypical), the one that sin might abound, Rom. 5:20. the other sacrificing for sin? Heb. 9:7,8,9.

Answer. That the law of Moses was added because of transgression, is manifest from that scripture quoted by me in my epistle, as well as from other scriptures; and one end why it was added in relation to transgression, was, that the offense might abound, which would make the sacrifice of propitiation for sin appear more necessary and more acceptable. And the sacrifices also relate to the sinner, some referring to the sin committed, others to the thankfulness and acknowledgment due for the peace, mercy, and blessings of God towards his poor, sinful, erring creatures; both which were to last till the time of reformation from the sin. Heb. 9:10. Gal. 3:19. (But that they were both added *upon one and the same account*, that I did not affirm; that is wrongfully put upon me.)

Now though both these were added because of transgression, yet they had not both the same use and service in relation to transgression, but the one was added to discover sin, and to make it appear exceeding sinful, Rom. 5:20. the other to blot it out, to take it away, to make atonement for it; which the sacrifices did, making the sinner upright and perfect as relating to that outward state and capacity, though they could not as pertaining to the conscience. Heb. 9:9.

Query 2. If the whole law, the ten commandments, as well as the sacrifices, were representations, figures, or shadows of something relating to Christ, the seed; then what did they in general, or either of them in particular, represent, figure, or shadow forth, before they were written in tables of stone, or since they were written in tables of stone, more of Christ then than now?

Answer. That the ten words were some of the precepts of Moses, and appertaining to the first testament or covenant, all which precepts were sprinkled with blood, cannot be denied. And the apostle distinguishes the precepts of Moses under the law, which were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices under the law, Heb. 7:19. from the precepts of Christ which he writes in other tables, chap. 10:16. which also are sprinkled with blood, but not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with his own blood; and he that receives any of these precepts out of the blood of Christ, cannot truly and spiritually obey them, though he may strive much to form his spirit into the obedience thereof. Now the time and season of their signification was the time which God allotted them under the law, wherein was the use of signs; but the gospel is a state of substance, of bringing the life and immortality into the heart, and into the possession of believers, which the state of the law shadowed. So that they are not signs since the gospel, since Christ put an end to the law-signs, shadows, and figures, nor yet before the law to believers, so far as they were in the new covenant; (for as the thing signified comes, so that which signifies it passes away) though that was a mixed state, wherein God gave a taste of both covenants,

before his perfect dispensing or bringing forth of either.

Query 3. If the whole dispensation of the law was given to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles, and so the Gentiles not bound to that law, but another way for them to know the mind of God; then whether that law cited, Rom. 2:15. which the Gentiles showed the work of in their hearts, be another law contrary to that law that was given to the Jews, even the ten commandments?

Answer. The law which is the substance, is not contrary to the law which is the shadow, but is the comprehending and fulfilling of it. The law in the Spirit (written by God's power and presence in the heart and mind) is not contrary to the law in the letter, but is a higher and more glorious ministration of it. The one commandment which God gave by Moses to the Jews, Deut. 30:11. which was the commandment of life and death, as relating to their inward and eternal state, ver. 15. was not contrary to the ten commandments, which God had commanded them before by another covenant, which he had made with them as an outward people, and which was to be their rule as to their outward state; for they were chosen by God to be a holy people outwardly, and so an outward rule of holiness and obedience was prescribed them; but by all their obedience thereto, they could not be justified, but only by hearing, believing, and obeying Christ, the word nigh in the heart, and by feeling in the spirit the blood of that one offering.

Query 4. If the Gentiles were not bound under that law that the Jews were, which carried the curse with it; then which way have the Gentiles redemption by Jesus Christ? seeing all that are redeemed, are redeemed from the law, and the curse thereof. Gal. 4:5 – 3:13.

Answer. As they were under the curse outwardly, by transgressing that outward law or covenant, and so missed of the outward happiness of the holy land, and still met with wrath and judgments, and at last utter cutting off, as to their outward state, and as to all their hope from that covenant; so he that comes to receive the ministration of the law of the Spirit, will find the curse as abundantly inwardly, even till that be cut down by the sword of the Spirit, which the curse is to; and that brought into dominion, to which is the promise and blessing. So that the Gentiles find as great need to be redeemed from the curse inwardly, which the inward law brings upon the transgressor, as the Jews did outwardly; yes, and find a more heavy burden and load than ever the Jews did outwardly. Paul, when he was alive in the outward administration of the law, not being acquainted with the inward, he knew little of the curse; he was according to it blameless, Phil. 3:6. but when he came to receive the living light of the spiritual administration of it into his spirit, then he felt the burden, and weight and misery of sin, and the curse indeed; and cried out, "O wretched man, who shall deliver?"

Query 5. If the duration of the dispensation of Moses' law in the letter was till Christ, the seed, should come and fulfill it, and the dispensation of Moses' law (so stated without distinction) between that that was perpetual, and that that was ceremonially vanishing, and so in the fulfilling of it besides; then what law or commandments that or they were, which, while Moses' dispensation was in full force, is said to be perpetually sure, to stand fast forever and forever, as Psa. 10. 11:7,8. and when Christ, the seed, was come, and had fulfilled all that the Father had appointed him to do, was established, Rom. 3:31. and not one jot or tittle of it to pass so long as heaven and earth remain? Mat. 5:18. and Luke 16:17.

Answer. That distinction between something in Moses' law being perpetual, and something ceremonial, is not sound and proper in this place; for all that was under Moses' law was but a shadow, as in that dispensation; and that testament was dedicated with blood (with the blood which was a shadow) which related to every precept, Heb. 9:18,19. and it was all substantial and perpetual in what it signified and related to. The sacrifices were substantial in that sacrifice which they signified, as well as the law and precepts were substantial in the law and precepts which they signified. And as the first covenant pointed at a second covenant, so the laws of the first covenant pointed at the law of the second covenant, the ministration whereof is from the Mediator of that covenant, and they come into the heart sprinkled with his blood. Now the law or commandment, which even under that dispensation, was to be perpetual and last forever, was "the word in the heart," and the laws thereof, Deut. 30:14. which Moses by especial order from God, and according to the tenor of another covenant, directed the Jews to. ver. 4. For the law, as administered by Moses, in the letter, is not perpetual or eternal; but as it comes from the Spirit, and is administered in the Spirit, so it is spiritual and eternal. That administration was fitted to that people; and, we know, the Lord, if he had pleased, could have given a fuller administration of his law in the letter than that was, as Christ plainly intimates several times. Mat. 5. But if it had been ever so full, yet the administration of it in the letter is to give place to the administration of it in the Spirit; so that the administration of it in the letter is not perpetual, but for the time which God allotted it; but the administration of it in the Spirit is eternal and perpetual, and there it remains an eternal light, witness, and sword against sin and the transgressor. And thus it is established in the hands of the Spirit, after the season of that ministration of it in the letter was ended; and thus not one jot or tittle of it was to pass away, after the other ministration, with every jot and tittle of it, was ended.

Query 6. If the coming of Christ in the flesh; and his fulfilling all the righteousness of the law; and being foretold by Moses to be that prophet that was to be heard in all things (which is not denied by us); but if by these he put an end to the law of the ten commandments, and gave forth another law to his house or family; then what law that is, and whether it be contrary to that law that he with the Father gave forth, as Deut. 33:2. with Psal. 80:17. which now is in gospel ministration holy, just, good, as Rom. 7:12 and spiritual. ver. 14.

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 principle, rise, first motions, and inward nature), giving forth his living commands against it. This is the law now, 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, though opened by the Spirit; for it is a fuller, a deeper kind of ministration, and so opens the things which it ministers more fully than a ministration of an inferior nature can. Yet it is not contrary to Moses' law, but comprehends all the substance, all the righteousness and equity of it (as I said before), which it as a shadow represented, and commanded to that outward or shadowy people, the Jews. But the law which Paul spake of, Rom. 7. was the law of the Spirit, or such a ministration of the law as Paul knew not, all the while he was under the ministration of Moses' law blameless; but this law found out sufficient blame in him. ver. 14. etc.

Query 7. If Jesus Christ, as he is the Son, gave forth another law to his house or family; and that law contrary to that that the Father gave forth; then whether there are not two lawgivers, when the Scriptures say there is but one. James 4:12.

Answer. The substance, when it is shadowed out, and or when it is nakedly dispensed, is one and the same thing; so that whenever it comes, it cannot be another thing than what the shadow represented it to be. Moses' dispensation and Christ's are one in Spirit; and when he comes in Spirit, he does not destroy either Moses or the prophets, but comprehends them; so that the law is but one, although the dispensations of it have been various; but the proper dispensation of the law now to Christians is Christ's dispensation, not Moses' dispensation; and Christians are now to look for light and knowledge of it in the tables where Christ writes it, according to his covenant. So that there have not been two laws given out, but the one law of God has been variously dispensed; in and according to the letter by Moses to the Jews; in and according to the Spirit by Christ to his disciples.

Query 8. If the tables of stone, the writing of the law of the ten commandments in the tables, and the law of the ten commandments itself which was written, were figures or representations; then whether the finger of God's Spirit does write the law of God two ways, in the inward table (so called); namely, in the heart of Christ's family; in one way while Moses' dispensation was on foot. Psal. 37:31. For the Psalmist speaks in the present tense (which was under that dispensation): now is it another way in this latter dispensation expressed? 2 Cor. 3:3.

Query 9. If two ways, then how does the finger of God's Spirit write them these ways?

Answer. The eternal covenant was the same under the law as under the gospel; and its tables were the heart then, as well as now; and its way of writing the same then as now, even by the finger of God's power or eternal Spirit: and there the Jews were even then referred for the inward writing of the law. Deut. 30:14. So that they who truly hearkened even to Moses, were to wait on this word, which was nigh in the heart, for the writing of his laws there. And they that hearkened to this law, which endures forever, knew the writing thereof in their hearts: whereas the Jews, who were very diligent to get the law into their hearts from the letter, could never thereby attain the writing of it there; but were still found breakers of it, and under that curse which belonged to the breach. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and the prophets, knew the inward Jew, who becomes so by the inward covenant, and by the inward dispensation of the law in that covenant; and the law which was after the promise could not disannul the promise which was before it: but it stood good and firm to the children, even to all the spiritual seed, the whole time of that outward dispensation of the law.

Query 10. If not, then how does the writing of the law in tables of stone represent the writing of the law in the tables of the heart; seeing the tables of the heart were wrote upon by the finger of God's Spirit, while the tables of stone were in full force, and the dispensation had not ceased?

Answer. Though the tables of stone, or law thereof, were in force to that outward people of God, the Jews; yet this did not destroy his inward people, nor his inward tables in their hearts, nor hinder him from writing his inward law there; but the inward and eternal covenant ran underneath to them inwardly, (even all the time of their outward dispensation) whereby they were made inwardly righteous and obedient to God. And as God had particularly directed, by Moses, to the word and

commandment of that covenant, so he would not fail to write it thereby in the hearts of such as turned to the word and commandment. So that this was the law which God wrote in the heart even then, and was always the inward substance, while as Moses' dispensation was but an outward sign thereof.

Query 11. If the law of the ten commandments itself, which enjoined love and duty to God, and love and duty to man, as Mat. 22:37,38,39,40, was or is a figure of another; then what law that is that is the anti-type of this law, which in succeeding of it, enjoins not love and duty to God, and not love and duty to man?

Answer. This query arises from a great mistake, as if the law in the letter and the law in the Spirit could not require the same thing; whereas they do require the very same thing in substance, but several ways, according to the difference of each administration; namely, the one literally, of a literal or outward people; the other spiritually, of a spiritual or inward people; one requires love according to the tenor of the letter, the other according to the Spirit.

Query 12. If the owning of the ten commandments, as they are plainly laid down in the letter, be a breaking of them in the Spirit, and especially those contained in the first table; then how does the truth of God written, which is life and truth, Acts 7:38. and Eccl. 12:10. and the Spirit which is given forth, meet together; seeing the Spirit leads and guides into all truth?

Answer. I do not know any who have said, "that the owning of the ten commandments, as they are plainly laid down in the letter, is a breaking of them in the Spirit;" but he that has the Spirit owns the dispensation of the letter in its place and season: but the Spirit does not teach them to run from his own dispensation (where it is livingly administered to such as wait on the eternal Word in his covenant of life for it), to that dispensation which was appointed for, and given forth to, others. But that the truth, as it is written (outwardly), is life, I do not read; but otherwise, 2 Cor. 3:6. where Paul says, *the letter kills* (speaking of the letter of the New Testament). The Spirit indeed guides into all truth; but it is the living soul whom he so guides, and it is the living truth into which he guides in the new covenant; though it was he also who gave forth, required, and was able to lead into, the letter of the old covenant.

Query 13. Whether, when Jehovah gave forth the ten commandments plainly as a law in the letter, he did intend, by the observation according to the letter, the breach of them by the Spirit?

Answer. The Spirit does not teach to break the commands in the letter; but such as are under the ministration of the letter, to observe them according to the letter: and such as are under the ministration of the Spirit, to fulfill the righteousness of them in the Spirit. Yet the Son of man is "Lord of the sabbath;" and if he bid a man "take up his bed and walk, which was bearing a burden and doing of work on the sabbath-day, it is no breach of the sabbath. Now this is most righteous; that as the Son's rest should be entered into under the gospel, so the day of rest should be kept by his disciples and family.

Query 14. Whether to say, the keeping the law of God according to the letter is a breaking of it in the Spirit, be not a charging of God, that gave it forth to be kept, and the Holy Spirit that incites us so to do now in this administration, James 2:8. and says they do well that do so; and yet you say they break it

in Spirit: but tell us by any one scripture, how a man, assisted by the Spirit to own Jehovah alone to be his God according to the letter of the first commandment, does break the command in the Spirit? Or so the like of any other of them.

Answer. This query is altogether from a mistake; for it was not said by me, that "the keeping the law of God according to the letter is a breaking of it in the Spirit;" but that he that "runs back to the law in the letter, to take up any command as held forth in it, will be found a breaker thereof in Spirit." And for this, the Jews in general, and Paul in particular, may be my instances; who was exceeding strict according to the letter of the law, but yet was a grievous breaker of it in Spirit; and did not love his neighbor as himself, but, in a blind zeal, was a bitter persecutor: and if the Jews had taken that direction of Moses, Deut. 30:14. the observation of the law in the letter might have been more easy to them. So that the turning towards, and receiving the Word in the heart, from which the letter came, is the only way to fulfill the letter; and the law is not so much as to be known, much less fulfilled, by running to the letter of it in the first place. And this I certainly know, that there is no coming to the Lord of life, nor no keeping chaste to him, but in the new covenant, and in the light of the Lord, as it is there dispensed: and till then, the mind cannot forbear making of images and false representations of him to itself; though being from the light of this covenant, it cannot discern that it does so, no more than Paul by the letter of the law, could discern that he was a breaker thereof in his violent persecutions.

Query 15. Whether the prophets, Jesus Christ, or the apostles, by their keeping the law according to the letter (that they did so is evident), did break the law in the Spirit?

Answer. The prophets were under the law as to their outward state; though inwardly not without feeling the virtue of the new covenant. Christ also was made under the law, and took upon him the fulfilling of that dispensation of Moses, that he might bring the believing Jews from under it into the liberty of the Spirit; that they might receive the adoption of sons, and the free ministration which was appointed for the sons, and might not be held under that ministration of bondage which was appointed for the servants. And the apostle bids believers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, not making themselves debtors to the law. Gal. 5:1. For they were children of the promise, children of New Jerusalem, the free woman, children of the new covenant, and not children of Mount Sinai, the old covenant, the law in the letter. chap. 4:15,16.

Query 16. If there be but one day of rest holy to the Lord, and all the sabbaths of the law were but signs of it, that is said to be the day of redemption which the Lord has made: then whether that day be a day natural, one of the seven days of the week, which either respects the day on which our Redeemer suffered, or that on which he rose again from the dead, or any other?

Answer. As the gospel is not natural, but spiritual; so its day of rest is not natural, but spiritual likewise. Yes, I may add this also, the six days' work in the new creation is not natural either.

Query 17. If not so, but that it should be intended applicable to the day or time of the gospel-administration from the time that Christ suffered in the flesh unto the end of the world: then whether this day, that is intended as a sabbath, is one with that day that the Scriptures intend and call a sabbath, which Christ himself gave his disciples charge to have respect unto in their flight. Mat. 24:20.

Answer. The supposition here put, demonstrates that those that put it have no acquaintance with the gospel-sabbath; but propose another outward time for it, even the time from Christ's suffering in the flesh, to the end of the world. Now if any should so affirm, it were as justly to be excepted against, as pressing the observation of the Jews' sabbath is. That which signifies is outward or natural, and signifies to that part which is without: that which is signified is inward and spiritual, and is known, entered into, kept, and enjoyed in the Spirit. It is a spiritual sabbath, not a natural, which God has instituted for his spiritual people, after he has led them out of spiritual Egypt, and teaches them to worship him in Spirit and in truth.

Query 18. If they intend one and the same sabbath-day, then how impossible was it for the disciples of Christ to escape fleeing on that sabbath-day, though ever so fervent in prayer, in regard that this sabbath spoken of, began when Christ had suffered, and put an end to the dispensation of Moses's law: and the flight spoken of by Christ, which respects the Lord's sabbath, was not until many years after Christ's sufferings.

Answer. The supposed sabbath being before denied, the foundation of this query fails.

Christ's sabbath is not an outward time or day in the flesh; but a day in the Spirit; even a day of rest from all the labors of the fleshly part. But this was spoken to before, in the answer to the last of W. Salter's queries, whereto I may add this: Christ spake to his disciples of things as they were able to bear them. Now as they understood not his death, so then they understood not the abolishing of those things which were to pass away after his death; so that Christ might very well call Jerusalem the holy place, and the seventh day the sabbath, speaking to them in that state.

Query 19. If they intend not one and the same sabbath-day, then which are the disciples of Christ to have respect unto; whether that that Jesus Christ enjoined his disciples to have respect unto, or that that Isaac Penington would enjoin the disciples to have respect unto.

Answer. This query has very little in it, save to show the unsavoriness of the spirits of them that put it, and their lack of acquaintance with the ministration of the Spirit. They that know the gospel-sabbath (which is the substance of the law-sabbath) can tell who enjoined it them; and can also tell that he has not required of them the observation of the Jews' sabbath. But they that are born after the letter have been always subject to revile and reproach the truths of the Spirit, and those that testify thereto.

Query 20. If the Lord's holy sabbath be that day which we may suppose is intended, by this paper sent unto us, to be the day that contains the time of gospel administration; then whether that sabbath does prohibit outward labor, as well as abstaining from sin? If not, then which way must this sabbath be kept? seeing that they that did and do observe the weekly sabbath, did and do it in the spirit, and rest by faith in Christ, worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth.

Answer. The gospel-sabbath begins not in the observation of outward time; but as it is spiritual, so it has a spiritual beginning, increase, and perfection, wherein there is a rest to the spirit from sin, and from the creaturely works, and a worshipping in the Spirit; even as on the outward sabbath there was a bodily ceasing from labors, and an outward worshipping. And he that hears the joyful sound of deliverance from sin and self-working, and enters into the faith (beginning to cease from his own



works and working, and to wait in the Spirit on the power for its working in him), has a taste of the gospel-sabbath, and beginning to see that day which the type pointed to, and ends in.

Query 21. If that that was ministered to Paul, Rom. 7. you shall keep the sabbath, or believe in the light, follow the light, and the observing of either of these in the Spirit, be a keeping the whole law; then how are the Scriptures observed, if the keeping of one commandment be a keeping the whole law, when the Holy Spirit in Scripture says, that he that offends in one point, is guilty of all? James 2:10.

Answer. I did not say, that the keeping of one commandment is the keeping of the whole law; but that the observing in Spirit any one of those there mentioned by me, is the keeping of the law: which was not barely said, but demonstrated; because no part of the law can be broken, but every one of these must be broken. He that commits any sin breaks the gospel-sabbath, which is a resting from all sin and self-works; errs from the law of love received in the Spirit, which shuts out all enmity and transgression both against God and man; departs from the fear, which keeps from departing from God by any iniquity; and enters into the lust, where is the womb of sin, out of the compass of which womb sin cannot be conceived, much less committed. So that Paul, in that law received from the spirit, *you shall not lust*, saw the whole body of sin struck at; whereas before, under the ministration of Moses in the letter (according to which he said he was blameless) there was not so much as the life of one sin struck at; but for all his exact answering of the law according to that ministration, he was alive still. To decide this controversy, let it be put to trial; let any one singly wait on the Lord for the administration of his law in the Spirit, and if the Lord give forth that command to him, "You shall not lust," in the clearness of the light of his eternal Spirit, let him try, if, continuing in obedience and subjection thereto, he can commit any one sin whatsoever. I do not say, that a man's proposing to himself that he will not lust, or his striving of himself to love and fear the Lord, or his applying himself to keep the sabbath, or rest from sin, to the Lord, will do this: no, this is but an administration in the letter, and will prove weak against the inward strength of the enemy; but receiving the law in its pure, living administration in the Spirit, and from the Spirit, here comes strength against the enemy, which is too hard for him, while it is abode in. And this the Apostle Paul taught the Galatians, who were running backward toward the law, and not forward in the Spirit: he bids them "walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25. And so doing, as they should not be under the law, ver. 18. so neither should they be breakers of the law: for within those bounds sin enters not, but is kept out; not so much as a lust against the law being there known, much less any open transgression against it: and against such as thus keep within the bounds of the Spirit there is no law, ver. 22,23. but against all that make themselves debtors to the law of the letter, there stand in force both the law of the letter, and of the Spirit also; and they cannot, in that state, be free from the condemnation and curse thereof, whatsoever they may imagine concerning themselves, and their own state, from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the Scriptures.

### **THE FIRST LETTER ANSWERED.**

There is a double ministration of the law: a ministration in the letter, and a ministration in the Spirit. The ministration of the letter was by Moses, from Mount Sinai, in tables of stone, to that outward people, the Jews: the ministration of the Spirit is by Christ, from Mount Zion, in tables of flesh, to believers, or his disciples. Now this is it which the Lord has made manifest to me, that the disciples of Christ, or believers, are to have recourse to their administration for the receiving of the law from the Spirit, and not to run back to that ministration which was literal and outward, and fitted to a literal

and outward people. This was more fully set down in my epistle in several particulars. Now in opposition to this, it is said,

First, That all, written in that epistle, makes no more at all against a gospel, spiritual observing in love the seventh day sabbath to the Lord, than they make against a gospel, spiritual observing of the other nine commandments.

Answer. My epistle strikes not at a gospel, spiritual observation of any thing; but he that will obey spiritually, must receive his command from the Spirit, in that way which the Spirit has chosen to dispense it to him. Now the same Spirit which wrote his law in the letter under the old covenant, writes his law in the hearts of believers under the new covenant, Heb. 8:10. which is a better covenant, and of which covenant Christ is the mediator, ver. 6. and Christ is as faithful to give forth the laws of his Spirit in the hearts of his people, as their condition requires them, as Moses was to give the law written in the tables of stone to his house. Heb. 3:5,6. And as Moses pointed his disciples to Christ coming in the flesh, so Christ pointed believers, or disciples, to the Comforter, the Spirit of truth: first to wait for him, and then to receive light or his law of life from him: and this is gospel, or new covenant, even that which the Spirit speaks or writes in the heart: and this has power in it, and saves; whereas the letter kills.

Now consider seriously, where should a believer go for these laws? To which covenant? To Moses' covenant, or to Christ's covenant?

Secondly, That all these commands, being holy and good, are to be loved, and in love to be observed, etc.

Answer. All the statutes, and judgments, and ordinances, and precepts of the Lord are holy and good, and are to be loved; but each is to be obedient to that which God requires of him, and to have recourse to that ministration of the law of God to him, under which God has set him. He that believes, he that has received the Spirit, is to have recourse to the law of faith, and to the Spirit, for his light or law: he who was under the law of Moses, was to have recourse to the law of Moses; for the law of Moses spake to them who were under it in his family, giving forth the precepts, or the commandments of that dispensation, to them who were under his testament. Heb. 9:20. And Christ speaks to his family by his Spirit, whom the disciples are to hearken unto, and not to grieve him, or quench his motions, or despise his prophesyings; but give diligent heed thereto, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in their hearts.

Now to obey in love does not make the distinction of the ministrations; for love belongs to each ministration. The Jews, in their day, were to obey the law in love, and to have it in their hearts. Deut. 6:5,6. But this makes the difference, the Jews were to seek to the letter for it; the disciple is to receive it from the Spirit; for he is to begin in the Spirit, Gal. 3:3. whereas the Jew's beginning was in the letter. And this is obedience in the newness of the Spirit, when the law is received fresh from the Spirit, who both writes new things, and brings to remembrance old things livingly and powerfully: but to go to Moses' ministration, and learn it there, and get it into the heart from there, that is according to the old ministration or covenant, which was given in the letter to the Jews, as may appear in that place last cited. Deut. 6:5,6.

Thirdly, That in the same Spirit and love that we have the Lord for our God, etc., in the same we are to remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.

Answer. The Lord teaches believers to know him to be the only true God, etc., by the law of the covenant of life in Christ Jesus, which he ministers to their spirits in the Spirit; whereby he teaches them so clearly and effectually, that they need not run back to the tables of Moses' covenant, from there to teach one another to know the Lord; but they shall all know him from his teaching, from the least to the greatest: yes, and I may add this; this covenant, by its ministration, teaches more clearly than the ministration of Moses' law in the letter could teach. Heb. 8:10,11. They that have been with Moses, and have learned the law of him, under the ministration of his covenant, have yet need of coming to Christ; but they that have been with Christ, and have learned the law of his Spirit, by the teachings of the new covenant in their hearts, have not need of being sent back to Moses. Moses points forward to Christ; but Christ (even in the flesh) sends not his disciples from his own dispensation back to Moses (though he also established the dispensation of Moses for its season), but points them forward to the Comforter, or to his appearance in the Spirit. And this is the mark of a Christian, which it is the intent of the letter to direct him to, and not for him to fix in the letter, as men have done since the apostasy from the Spirit.

This argument is further enforced thus, because he that said the other, said this in the same law and spirit.

Answer. It is true, he that said the other by Moses to the Jews, said this also to them, and they were strictly bound thereto; but that which binds the disciple is the ministration of the new covenant, where Christ writes this law in the minds and spirits of his people, by which they are bound, and such as are out of that, the Lord, when he comes to examine them concerning their faith and obedience, will say to them, "Who has required this at your hands? Were you children of the new covenant? Did you receive the spirit? Had you a measure of faith given you? Were you new creatures? Why did you not keep to your rule? Why did you not wait on the spirit, and receive the law from the New Jerusalem, from where it issues forth to the family of believers?" The Jews were to be taught by precepts and judgments from Moses; but "all your children shall be taught of the Lord."

It is said yet further, "so that if you keep the other, and not this, you are a transgressor of the ROYAL LAW of LIBERTY."

Answer. What is the royal law? What is the law of liberty? Was the law as it was administered by Moses the royal law? Or is it the royal law as it is administered by the Son, who is the King of saints, and 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 gender to bondage? Gal. 4:24. But in the ministration of the law by the Spirit is life and liberty. ver. 26. and 2 Cor. 3:17. And this very law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," is royal, and a law of pure liberty, and there is no bondage in it thus administered: but let any man now read it in the letter, and strive to obey it to the utmost he can, he shall find it weak through the flesh, accusing and imbondaging him. And this is the reason that Christians so mourn in their prayers, even as persons in bonds, because they know not the royal law of liberty; because they feel not the love which the Spirit begets, but strive to get the letter into their hearts, and to answer the commands in the letter with what love and obedience they can

come at; and this (through not seeing into the true covenant and ministry of Christ) they call obeying in the spirit. The testimony of Jesus, Rev. 12:17, is the Spirit of prophecy, chap. 19:10; and his commandments come fresh from that Spirit of prophecy, which are to be taken heed to till the day dawn, and the day-star arise, and then a fuller ministration is witnessed than that of prophecy, even the shining and appearing of that which was prophesied of, which every believer is to wait for in the prophecies of the Spirit, and in obedience to those commands, which come livingly into his heart from the Spirit of prophecy.

Fourthly, That the fourth command is to be in love kept by all believers.

Answer. All the commands of Christ's covenant are to be kept by believers, according as he pleases to dispense them under his administration in the new covenant: but the laws of the old covenant are not the laws of the new covenant, as so dispensed; but only as they are comprehended in the righteousness which is taught and required by the Spirit, which is fuller, stricter, and exacter than that which the law of Moses required.

Nor do I hereby go about to teach any to break the least of Christ's commands, but the way to fulfill them; which is by keeping to the certain knowledge and obedience of them, in that ministration where Christ has promised to dispense and make them known to believers, which is under the ministry of his own covenant, writing them in their hearts and minds by his Spirit. And here 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 in him close to the Spirit, shall not be able to break any law of righteousness, but the righteousness even of Moses' law shall be fulfilled in him.

Christ is the rest of the gospel (as he is also the holy land): believing is the entering into this rest; here is his sabbath, and the keeping of it. Keep in the faith, the gospel rest is kept. Parting with every lust that he makes manifest, observing every thing 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: here is the obedience of the faith, and the holy and spiritual life and subjection of the living soul to its living King. Here is the beginning of a true Christian, his growth, his perfection; but as for times, places, persons, etc., these are of another nature, 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. Let that which is invisible, whose habitation is out of the reasoning part, feel and read me in that which is invisible: for I do not make void the law by faith, or through publishing the ministry of the Spirit; but establish it in its ministration in the Spirit to the disciples of Christ; who keeping to the Spirit, cannot transgress the righteousness of it, though they may there learn not to esteem one day above another, but to esteem every day, no days having ever had any real holiness in them one above another; but only a figurative, or representative, which the substance, Christ and his Gospel, swallows up: for as his day dawns, those things which were the shadows of it fly away.

## **THE SECOND LETTER ANSWERED.**

Objection 1. IT is said to be "dangerous so to hold forth the spiritual sabbatism, as to deny the weekly sabbath, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ rested, etc., and which he blessed and sanctified to Adam and his posterity," etc.

Answer. The gospel is a state of substance, of fulfilling the types and shadows of the law, by bringing believers into the possession of that which they signified of. Canaan was a type of Christ, who is the land of the living, in whom every believer has a habitation at present, according to the proportion of his faith: and 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 the sin, the unbelief, the unrest. But that the sabbath of the law, the rest thereof, which pointed to the faith, is still to be held up in the times of the gospel, I know no scripture which so teaches, 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 2. It is said, that "Heb. 4. speaks of three rests, the seventh day, or sabbath rest, Israel's rest in Canaan, and a remaining rest, whereof 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, answerable to the state of the gospel. David was not only acquainted with the law state, but with the free spirit, (Psalm. li) and the eternal law thereof. He knew the new creation, the creating of a new spirit (with its travel through the law) 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 incites 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. "To-day, 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; 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 law state, which was to pass away.

Objection 3. It is said, "ceremonial signs are done away, but the ten commandments under the mercy-seat are of another nature: and that there are signs which are not yet abolished (as the rain-bow, sun, moon, and stars), but still remain for us to make good use of."

Answer. The mercy-seat under the law is done away, and the substance thereof is come; and will you not give him leave to write his law in the tables which he shall choose, where his disciples may read it with the eye which he gives? Is his law now to be read in the shadow, or with the outward eye, or to be looked for under the old mercy-seat of the outward tabernacle? Or is it to be read with the eye of the new creature, with the eye of faith, with the eye of the Spirit, in the everlasting gospel, where the life itself is read, and in other books or writings without, but tidings or relations of the life? Here Christ, here the Spirit, here the eternal life, here the love, the joy, the peace, the rest, the purity, which are eternal, are seen, are felt, are handled, are enjoyed: for the true faith is indeed the substance of the things hoped for, giving victory over the enemies which disturb, and a quiet habitation in him who is the rest.

And as touching signs, I do not say that signs are so done away as that there is now no good use to be made of them; but in reading the law, and shadows thereof, the Lord may please, by his Spirit, to

enlighten the spirit of him who reads in his fear to see through them: but this I do not find, that so much as any one sign or shadow under the law was to be continued in that way of service under the gospel; for indeed to what end should it? When that is come which it signified, is not its work at an end? And that that sabbath was given for a sign (as well as any other sabbaths of the law) I find expressly. *Exod. 31:13 to 18.*

Objection 4. It is said, "That though Christ's law be a new law; yet it is also old, given of old to the Jews."

Answer. Yes, it is older than so; for it was written in Abel's and the other holy men's hearts, long before this covenant of the law in writing was made with the Jews. And consider well which is now to stand in the times of the gospel, the writing of the law by the Spirit in the hearts of believers, as it was written by virtue of the promise before the law was given, or the outward and visible writing under the law, which was done for the sake of, and as a suitable dispensation for, that outward people. It was not thus from the beginning; but after a long time: for when God chose an outward people, he chose also this way of writing to signify something by; which signification is concerning another state; in which state, that which was signified is to be set up and advanced, and not the shadows which were significant of it.

It is further said, "That the Lord writes these things new in his people's hearts, to know the Lord, as their God, and as the God and Father of Jesus Christ, and as their Father in him; and to love their brethren as Christ loved them. And he writes this law also in their hearts, 'You shall have no other gods but me; make no image, exalt my name, keep holy the sabbath,'" etc.

Answer. If God write these things in the heart, are they not to be read there? If God write them in the new covenant, and in the new tables, shall not I read them there? And if I can read there in this living book what God writes in it by his Spirit, is not this nearer to me, and clearer, and read by a more certain eye, than what I can read with my outward eye in tables of stone? Oh! do not turn the believer out of his way: do not hinder him from reading in the book, which is clear and infallible, the clear and infallible things of God. Will God write in my heart, and will he not give me an eye to read? Shall he give me an eye to read, and shall I not read therewith? You has here confessed this to be the new writing, and the new writing belongs to the new covenant; both which are proper to the gospel state, and to Christ's mediation, who is Mediator of the new covenant. *Heb. 8:6* "And in that he says, a new, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away." *ver. 13.*

Objection 5. It is said, "That love being the sum and substance of the law of the Spirit, makes no more against the fourth commandment than against the rest."

Answer. Love is the substance of them all, and they are all fulfilled in it; but they are not after this manner fulfilled; namely, that a man should strive particularly to keep them in his eye, and so labor to fulfill them in love; but rather thus, in waiting on the Lord, to receive love from him, and to be kept by him in the love; in this love received they are all fulfilled, and cannot be broken, and this is an easy yoke. This is the new birth, and the path thereof; the other is but the old creature, with its striving after the path and inheritance of life. And as this love is the fulfilling of the law, so the heart is the tables of this love, wherein God writes both the whole and all the parts of his law. Now I am not against any man, who in singleness of heart, applies himself to the letter; yet it is but the old way, and a conversing

with Christ after the manner of Moses' dispensation; but I must confess that I am for the new covenant, and for the ministry of the Spirit, which is far beyond the letter; and though I have known Christ and the laws of his life after the flesh; yet henceforth my desire is not after knowing him so any more, but to know him in the eternal life of his Spirit, and to drink of the fruit of the vine, new with him in his Father's kingdom.

## **A BRIEF EXPLICATION**

### **OF THE MYSTERY OF THE**

### **SIX DAYS' LABOR**

### **AND**

### **SEVENTH DAY'S SABBATH**

**For such to behold, the eye of whose Spirit is opened by the pure Anointing; and who are not so drowned in their Conceivings and Reasonings about the Sense of the letter, as most of the Professors of this Age are**

*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*

HE that hears the joyful sound of the ever-living power, calling him by the voice of his eternal light out of the darkness, out of the death, out of the misery, out of the dominions, territories, and deep slavery of Satan unto himself, and comes unto him in the virtue and power of that life which calls, he has a taste given him of the eternal rest, and a promise of entering into it.

But the entrance into the fulness thereof is not presently; 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; and many battles are to be fought with enemies by the way, and also with the enemies which possess the holy land; and many hardships 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 through the fire with the seed. In plain terms, there must be a taking up of the yoke, and a learning of Christ under the yoke, till the proud, the stiff, the stubborn, the wise, the willful, the selfish spirit, the hard, stony heart, be wasted and worn out by the cross, and nothing left but 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 repulse when he allows the enemy to prevail, and hoping, even beyond hope, for his relief and victory in due season: here is the labor, here is the travail, here is the working under the life, with the measure of grace and power received from the life. So that, first, the day-spring from on high visits; from that visitation there is light entered into the heart; by closing with that light there is grace received; with this grace received there is work to be done for God; his talent is to be improved all the six days, by all that will rest with him on the seventh, and that desire to cease from their labors in the fruition of the faith, the life, the power; the power living, becoming, and performing all in them. And he that does not improve the talent; he that does not 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, he can never arrive at the land of rest (though perhaps he may arrive at that which he may call so), but when the eternal witness awakes in him, he will find the lack of it, and bitterly bewail his grievous mistake.

Now in this hard travail and grievous labor under the close laws and spiritual commandments of the life (hard I mean, yes, very hard, to the unrenewed part, though easy and natural to that part which is renewed and born of God), it pleases the Lord now and then to give a day of refreshment, causing his life so powerfully to spring up, that it even sensibly is and does all in the heart. This is a sabbath, wherein the soul rests in the powerful movings and operations of the life, and does not find any stress of trouble, or hardship, or labor upon it; but sits still in the power, is at ease in the life, in the eternal virtue, which lives, and moves, and is all in it; and no pain, no trouble, no grievousness of any command is felt; but to it all is easy, all is natural, all is purely pleasant; the life (to which all its own laws, statutes, ordinances, judgments, ways, and paths are easy) performing all it calls for, even as fast as it calls for it. And here, not only a sabbath of days, but also a sabbath of weeks, yes, sometimes a sabbath of years (besides the everlasting jubilee, or year of perfect redemption itself) is known and witnessed by such as have waited on the Lord in singleness of heart, under the yoke of his Spirit, for the bringing down of the rough and untoward nature, and for the raising up of the meek and lowly heart.

But here it is exceeding easy running out, and starting aside; it is easy running out from under the yoke, to avoid the bitterness of the hardship to the earthly part; it is much easier running out on the day of rest, and so losing the truth in a joy and rejoicing, even such a one as might have a true ground. Oh! who can but think the bitterness of death is past, when all enemies are vanished, and there is nothing left but the Lord and the soul embracing each other! And who can but be unwilling to come back again to his labor, and to the residue of his hard travail afterward? And yet it is far better to return to the work in the vineyard, and to suffer again with the seed, than to keep up the rest in a notion, and so to lose the life and pure presence and virtue of the seed, when it returns unto, and calls back to the labor. Oh, how many have perished here! allowing a divorce from that which led them into the rest, not being willing to go back again with it to fill up the residue of its sufferings, which were yet behind, and so have kept up a false, dead, notional rest, after the true sabbath was ended.

Now there is no way for such, but to wait to feel the living breath, the quickening virtue, the day-spring from on high, which, by the brightness of its rising, can discover this false rest, this dead rest, this



notional rest, this ease in the earthly, in the fleshly, in the understanding part, which they uphold by things they have formerly gathered from the Scriptures, or from their own (perhaps once living) experiences; but now hold out of the feeling and possession of the life, in the dead part. But that it is thus with them they can never see, until the light from which they have erred spring up and discover it to them; and when the light does arise and discover it, they will find the way of return, and the path of redemption, much more difficult to them than it was at first: yet it is better to part with the ease of the flesh, and to undergo the pangs of a new birth, than to miss of the inheritance in the good land.

There are three steps or degrees of the blessed estate: First, there are *desires*, thirstings, and breathings, *begotten after the life*. Secondly there is a *laboring in the service* (under the yoke) *by the virtue which springs from the life*. Thirdly, there is a *rest*, or sitting down at ease *in the life*. By the stirring of life in the soul, desires after life are kindled. He in whom the desires are kindled, and who feels the eternal virtue, cannot but be running the race; he whom the Spirit of the Lord finds faithful in running the race, it pleases the Lord ever and anon to be giving him a taste of the rest. Thus the spring stirring, the soul cannot but move towards its center; and as it enters into and fixes in its center, it partakes of the rest. Now to know the leadings of the Spirit forward and backward into these, into desires, when he pleases; into the labor and service of the life, when he pleases; into the sweet rest and perfect repose in the life, when he pleases; here is the safety and sweet progress of the renewed spirit. That man who is born of the Spirit is to wait for the movings, breathings, and kindlings of the Spirit in him: and when the Sun arises, he is to go forth to his labor in the light thereof, and in the night and withdrawing of the Sun, to retire; and when his seventh day of rest comes, he is to receive it from, and enjoy it in, the Spirit; and afterwards to be willing to begin his week again, even till his whole race and the full course of his pilgrimage be finished. Yet if it were possible for man, after he is come to Christ, to abide perfectly with him, to cease from lust, to keep within the faith, to draw naturally in the yoke, to bow in the spirit continually to the Father of spirits, there would be a continual sabbath kept in the passage, even before the great, full, and perfect sabbath in the end. The hardness and uneasiness of the labor is because of a part contrary to the life, which, when it is worn out, there will be no more labor, but the yoke will become the rest, and all the motions and operations of life will flow forth naturally in the rest. And here is "the patience and faith of the saints," to wait under the yoke, under the daily cross to that part which is to be brought and kept under, till all the bonds of captivity be broken through by the life, and the veil of flesh rent from the top to the bottom (the remaining of which is that which stops the free current of life), and then shall the soul enter into the holy of holies, obtaining the full possession of the everlasting inheritance, and of the eternal redemption, and know sorrow, tears, bonds, sickness, death, captivity (no not so much as grappling with them, or traveling out of them) no more; but the enjoyment of the plenty and fulness of the life, reaping all the pleasant fruits of life in the rich land of life for evermore.

## SOME CONSIDERATIONS PROPOUNDED TO THE JEWS,

**That they may Hear and Consider, and their Hearts at length may be turned towards that which alone is able to Convert them to God; that they may once more become his People, and enter into an Everlasting Covenant with him that may not be broken; that so they may abide in his Love and Covenant of LIFE, and remain his People forever.**

Consideration 1. *What great love, mercy, and kindness God showed to that people, above all nations and peoples under heaven!* Of his own free love he set his heart upon them, choosing them to be a people to himself. He brought them out of Egypt, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; he mightily preserved them in, and led them through, the wilderness. He entered into a covenant with them to become their God, and betrothed them unto himself for his own lot and inheritance. He gave them righteous laws, judgments, statutes, and ordinances, both of worship towards him, and of an upright demeanor and conduct among themselves, and towards all men. He drove out the heathen from before them, and gave them a pleasant land to possess, even *the glory of all lands*, a land flowing with milk and honey. He built a habitation for himself among them; first a moving sanctuary or tabernacle, afterwards a more settled abiding place or temple (which Solomon built), wherein was the ark of his presence, where he was to be sought unto and inquired of by them, and towards which their prayers were to be directed; and there was a mercy-seat, whereof they had large experience, and he ever and anon sent prophets among them, to reprove their errors and backslidings, and to set them to rights again. He raised up judges likewise to defend them; and although they were weary of his government, desiring a king, after the manner of the nations, so vehemently, that they even forced a king from him, yet he took him away from them, and after him, chose "a man after his own heart, to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance; who fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands." What should I say more? What was lacking of love, of care, of goodness, of kindness, of mercy, of gentleness, of any thing that a people could desire of their God? I say, what was lacking of all this on God's part? What could he have done more for his vineyard than he did do? No, he emptied upon them all the goodness, all the mercy, love, favor, etc., that that covenant would hold to the full; yes, and more too; for he bare with them more than that covenant required him to bear, and redeemed them oftener than that covenant engaged him; "yes, many times turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath," as he might often have done according to the tenor of that covenant. "Yes, in all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them:" and he was still ready to say in his heart, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie;" at length they will see their error, repent, and be true to me; insomuch as he was never weary of saving them, of trying them again and again; of stirring up his bowels of love and pity to redeem them; of sending his servants and prophets among them to warn and reclaim them, even till at last it was manifest, that there was no remedy but he must cast them off, and provoke them to jealousy by a foolish nation, Deut. 32:20,21. drawing them nigh to him, who had been worshipping stocks and stones; making them become a people, who had long been no people; and casting these out of his sight, making them become no people, who had so long been his chosen, peculiar people, in covenant with him, and nigh unto him, above all the families of the earth.

Consideration 2. *What constant rebellion and stiffness of spirit that people all along expressed towards the Lord!* What wild, sour grapes they still brought forth to him; sour love, sour obedience, sour worship and sacrifices, such as the pure palate of the Lord could find no relish nor savor in: But

as Moses had told them, that it was not for their righteousness God chose them to give them the good land to possess, for they were a rebellious and stiff-necked people; Deut. 9:6,7. so it was not for their goodness that God continued his love to them, for they were all along provoking him. Jer. 44:4. When God came to show that great mercy to them of redeeming them out of Egypt, and bid them cast away their idols, they would not cast away their idols, Ezek. 20:7,8. neither did they regard that mercy of redemption from the house of bondage, and from the iron furnace; but said to Moses, it was better for them to stay in Egypt, and to serve the Egyptians. Exod. 14:12. Again in the wilderness, how did they provoke him all those forty years of mercy; how did they err in their hearts from his pure fear, and from love to him, and from faith and confidence in him! How did they murmur against him, and against Moses and Aaron, their leaders! How did they forget his works and his wonders continually! When they came near the land, and should have gone in to possess it, then they would not, but repined and rebelled because of the tallness and strength of the enemy, and of their cities; and when they were forbid to go, then they would go and fight with them. What should I mention the time of the judges and of the kings; how often the Lord made them smart by their enemies in their own land; how often he gave them up to captivity out of their land, even till at length that great captivity of Babylon befell them, and since that a greater captivity and desolation than that of Babylon.

Consideration 3. Whether God, having tried this people even to the utmost, by that covenant which he made with them by Moses in Mount Sinai, may ever please to try them so any more: or if there yet remain any mercy or love from God towards them, whether it is not to be expected another way, and upon another account? This is very necessary and profitable for them to consider, that they may not be looking that way for mercy and favor from God; in which it is never to come, and so have their eyes and hearts diverted from that way according to which it is to come; for this must needs put them back exceedingly, if their eyes be looking out one way, and the love of God has chosen another channel to run towards them in. This may make them refuse the very mercy, love, and redemption, when it comes, suspecting it not to be it, because it comes not in the way, and after the manner, that they look for it. Now God has expressly said, that when he shall be pacified in them, and shall look again upon them with an eye of favor, to do them good, it shall not be by their covenant (which could never last, but was still broken on their parts), but by his own everlasting covenant, which he would establish to them. Ezek. 16:60, etc. It should therefore diligently be inquired by them, What covenant it is which is called their covenant. ver. 61. And what covenant it is which is called God's covenant. ver. 62. That they may withdraw their eyes and hopes from the one, from which their redemption, recovery, and mercy cannot come, towards the other from which it is to come? To which query, for their sakes, it is in my heart to return this answer.

Answer. Their covenant is that which they entered into with God, the covenant that their hearts chose to unite with God by: and that was to this effect. "That if God would show them his will, they would obey it. Go you near," said they to Moses "and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak you unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto you, and we will hear it and do it." Deut. 5:27. Thus they thought, but the Lord knew otherwise: for "Oh" says the Lord, "that there were such a heart in them!" etc. ver. 29. and Moses knew otherwise, he knew that they would "corrupt themselves, and that evil would befall them in the latter days." Deut. 31:29. But God's covenant was the free covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the covenant of his grace, the covenant of his free love, whereby he was able to reach them in Egypt, upon the cry of the seed in them (in the midst of their idolatries, and to bring them out and do them good, notwithstanding their stubbornness and stiff-neckedness),

even before the other covenant was made; this covenant of love was God's covenant. This is the covenant God remembered to them in the days of their youth, while they were young and tender, and not yet grown up to be a people under the other covenant; and this is the covenant which lasts for ever, which is not founded upon their obedience, but on God's free love to them for his own name's sake, and for their father's sake with whom he freely made it.

Question. What does this covenant contain?

Answer. Putting his fear in the heart, writing his laws in the mind, pouring of 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 of the created spirit right by the presence of that Spirit which created it. see Jer. 31:31,32. Ezek. 36:25, etc. 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 but by this covenant, but are 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 caused to walk in his ways. As therefore they receive the Spirit, are brought into the fear, have the law written on their minds, and become subject thereto, so will they taste of this covenant, be brought into redemption by it, and become a glory inwardly, and outwardly also upon the earth.

Question. What is the way for them to have the fear of God put in their hearts, to have their hearts circumcised, to receive the Spirit and his laws into their minds, and so to come into this covenant?

Answer. There is no other way but that to which Moses himself directed them, after God had made the other covenant with them, and tried them long by it, together with many temptations, signs and wonders, both before and after it; and seeing that by all these they had not a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear, Moses at length directs them to another covenant, the word whereof would give them eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand. Which covenant was a covenant besides the former, Deut. 29:1. and was indeed the covenant concerning life or death eternal, chap. 30:15. (the other being but a covenant of their outward state, made with them after their coming out of Egypt, upon their deliverance therefrom, and according to their choice to become a people to God according to it.) This word, Moses tells them, was near them (nearer than that which was spoken by God on the mount, and afterwards written on tables of stone). The voice of this word and the commandment thereof was nearer, that they need not seek anywhere abroad for it, but only listen at home to hear its speech, obey it in the faith, and live forever. Deut 30:11, etc. This is the way for them and all men to come into this covenant, and there is no other; there is a light shining in the darkness of man's heart, which springs up in him, and casts forth its rays to discover and draw him out of the darkness: now as this light is felt, loved, understood, in spirit, hearkened and cleaved to in the pure faith, which it begets; that which cleaves to it, is drawn out of the darkness by it, into the covenant of the pure, eternal light, where God is, and where all they are translated, who are drawn to him in and by this covenant, as they are kept, preserved, and continue in the faith, love, and obedience of it. Now I would yet put these few things more to them.

First, Whether that people of the Jews, as they stood related to God in that covenant (given by Moses at Mount Horeb), with the covenant itself, and all things appertaining thereto, were not a shadow of

some inward and spiritual thing 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; and 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 chap. 66:1,2. So 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? Psalms 51:17. and Psalm 50:14. Was not their Canaan, or holy land, a type of the true, holy, spiritual rest, which the faith gives entrance into? Their city Jerusalem, a type of the Jehovah-shamma? 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. Mark that place, if it did 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, If they were types, representations, or shadows of something spiritual to come, then were they not to give place to that which is spiritual when it came, and so to be swallowed up in it? Is not the spiritual glory the glory? The inward Jew, the Jew inward? 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 not this the choice house to God? And is 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 comes 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 unto God, that you might partake thereof; and then your eye would not be so much on that which is outward; which, if you had, even to the utmost of your desire, is not comparable to the inward!

Lastly, Search the prophets, see if the Messiah is not first to come in a despicable way, as a man of sorrows, Isa. 53:2,3. whose visage in that appearance was to be more marred than any man's. Isa. 52:14. And consider whether he was not to be cut off, though not for himself, Dan. 9:26. and then to sit at the right hand of God, until his enemies be made his footstool, Psalm 110:1. before he come in that glory wherein you expect him. So that if he be not thus come already, then that coming of his is yet to be expected, and his hands and feet are yet to be pierced by you, and then afterwards you may look upon him whom you have pierced, Zechariah 12:10. and all the families of Israel mourn bitterly apart for it. ver. 12.

When Moses gave the law, the veil was over his face; your fathers were not able to bear the light wherein the law was given, nor the light wherein the prophecies of the prophets were given; and so they still erred from the law, were offended at the prophets while they were alive, and misunderstood their words after their death. Now do not you search 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 it be thus, if the veil be over your hearts, if you be ignorant of the true light, of the true eternal power wherein the Scriptures were given forth, you must needs misunderstand them, misunderstand Moses, misunderstand the prophets, misunderstand the things spoken concerning the Messiah; and so not be able to see unto the end of those things ministered by Moses, and of that ministration which was to pass away; nor into 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; that in that light you may 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, and enjoy the blessedness they spake 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; which can never be made new by any ministry of the letter without the Spirit, but alone by the ministry of the Spirit, whether with or without the letter, as he pleases.

I. P.

## **SOME FEW QUERIES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### **PROPOSED TO THE CAVALIERS**

#### **BEING OF WEIGHTY IMPORTANCE TO THEM**

[1660]

#### **QUERY I**

WHETHER all those sufferings, which have befallen that party for these many years, were just as relating to God or no? that is, whether they so sinned against him, forgetting his name and fear, dealing hardly with such as truly desired to fear him, (and who in his true fear did differ from their way of worship) exalting man in a hard and arbitrary government both over the consciences of the upright-hearted towards God, and over the rights, liberties and persons of the nation, which with many other things, as the vanity and excess of the Court, the looseness and profaneness of the gentry, swearing, drinking of healths, and following the vain pomps and vanities of the world, (which by their very baptism they stand engaged to deny) might fill up their ephah, sway down their balance, and sink their prosperity: I say, whether these and such like things, might not justly provoke the Lord to turn his hand upon them, to overturn their church government, smite their King who was their strength, and bring them under the feet of those, whom before they had trampled upon and oppressed? Now though they may cry out against men, and in the day of their power fly out upon the rod wherewith the Lord chastised them, yet this is more proper and safe for them now, to consider what hand the Lord had in all these things, and whether he was just therein or no.

## QUERY II

WHETHER in these their sufferings they have humbled themselves before the Lord, submitting to his hand, mourning over their sins and transgressions against him, and have more desired his gracious mercy and power, to pardon and deliver them from their sins, than to be freed of their sufferings; so that if ever it should please him to take his hand from off them, and bring them again into place and power, they might not so provoke him any more, either against themselves or their King, but in true humility and in his fear (and in love to his name, truths and people, and the people of this Nation) might walk righteously, meekly, and faithfully in the exercising of authority for the good and peace of all, and not for the hurt of any?

## QUERY III

WHETHER the cause (which they now may easily trample upon and despise) in those people who were engaged against them, was not just on their behalf also in its first rise, and at the beginning of the controversy; and whether their spirits might not be stirred up by God thereunto? wherein if they had continued faithful, going on singly in the work of the Lord, and not seeking themselves, nor the hurt of any, but the just rights, liberties, and good of all according to their engagements, this overturn might never have befallen them. But they letting God's cause fall day after day, time after time, one opportunity after another, no marvel though the Lord has allowed them to fall also: for it was not the intent of the Lord to set up their persons (as was often testified to them while they stood) but to set up truth and righteousness in these nations, and to give his people full liberty of fearing and obeying him without fear of men. This the Lord began to effect by them, wherein their service was very precious and acceptable to him, which if they had gone on faithfully in, they had never seen this day.

## QUERY IV

WHETHER they consider the hand of the Lord in turning things thus about, or whether their eye be on instruments: on such as were against them on the one hand, and on such as were for them on the other hand? for is it not very wonderful to consider, how many plots and contrivances they have had one after another to bring this about (some whereof were very likely to take, and hard to be disappointed) and yet all have still failed: and now at length unlooked for, it has as it were dropped into their mouths in such a way, & after such a manner, and in so full a measure, as they could hardly have expected. O that they could eye the Lord herein, and fear before him, earnestly desiring and waiting for his grace to guide them, that at length one generation on whom he shows mercy, might show themselves worthy of his mercy, and not provoke him against them by abusing it, & so on a sudden forfeit and hazard the loss again, of what they have been so long desiring and aiming at!

## QUERY V

WHETHER they consider how easy it is for the Lord to turn things about again, in as unexpected a way to them, as this was to those who are now overturned. Indeed they are settled as to the eye of man: what can withstand them? what can rise up against them? but alas what is the strength of a nation to the Lord? The whole nation are men, and not God; and their whole strength flesh, and not Spirit: and if the Lord rise up against them, what are they before him? O that they could fear the Lord for his

goodness, and that those that are fallen under them might fear him for his severity, and that we might all give over upbraiding and fighting against one another, and every man fight against the lusts of his own heart: against pride, passion, envy, covetousness, hard-heartedness, oppression of men's consciences, doing to others what we would not receive from others, *etc.* for the hand of God is swift against the unrighteous spirit, and he overturns quickly. And if this present settlement do not please him, but if this generation after all their afflictions prove unworthy of this mercy, not letting fall what the hand of the Lord has gone forth against, but thinking again to settle upon firmer foundations what God has all this while been shaking, the Lord will laugh at their counsels and at all their strength, and overturn them in a moment. This has been it has undone the foregoing powers, they have been eyeing men, and strengthening themselves against men, and if they could but be strong against the visible powers, they thought they were safe and secure enough, and so have overlooked the invisible hand, which was the strength that went further against them. Therefore O *Cavaliers* consider in this your day, how strong are you against the invisible arm of the Lord? If you are not able to deal therewith, fear before it, and make peace with it, lest it prove that the Lord has raised you up to make his power known upon you, and to get himself a name by your overthrow. This is a warning of love to you, even from that which saw this your day before it came.

#### QUERY VI

WHETHER an evil spirit, a loose spirit, a spirit which is out of the fear of God (and against them that fear God) has not risen up in the Nation, and been too much encouraged since your coming into power? The end of government is to bring men into, and encourage and preserve them in the fear of God, which is the spring of all goodness, righteousness and equity (not to bring men into a formal way of worship, that the Lord always loathed; but to encourage in the true fear, which teaches that worship of him in heart and spirit which his soul ever loved.) Now consider seriously, is not iniquity broke loose? is not the chain as it were taking off from the wicked, and preparing to be laid on the righteous? What vanity, what excess, abuse of the creatures, swearing, drinking, scoffing, *etc.* is already broke forth? yes and how are those that in truth of heart fear the Lord, and apply themselves to meet in his fear to worship him, already derided, disturbed, and threatened as if this should not be lawful for them much longer? Alas, alas; If you do not take heed, your ruin will be writ on the very entrance into your prosperity! O nation of *England*, why do you thus provoke the Lord against yourselves, against your *King*, against your *Parliament*, against that part of the nation who have been so long sufferers? will you throw away the Lord's mercy as soon as it is bestowed on you? will you hasten to stir up his anger & jealousy against you? O how short will your day be, if you proceed after this manner! O remember God, and be troubled and deeply humbled for these things; and rejoice with trembling, and do not show vain expressions of joy out of his fear, but let your joy be in his fear, and then we also shall rejoice with you, and hope that the wrath of the Lord may be diverted from this nation, which these things help to kindle and increase.

#### QUERY VII

HAVE you considered, or do you yet seriously apply yourselves duly to consider, what the Lord's controversy with this nation and the powers thereof all this while has been, and how it may be ended, that there may be no more striving against him, neither by the powers nor people of the nation? for what are men, that they should contend with God? how can they prosper therein? had they never so



great advantage of gaining or carrying a cause against him, yet how certainly would they fall before him! Now look back honestly, singly, faithfully, in the simplicity of your hearts, search and consider, what God has contended with the powers of the nation for, these many years: and if the Lord please (to such as thus search after it) to discover what it has been for, let the Lord have his pleasure; for assuredly he will not fail of recovering and advancing his cause, how much fallen soever it seems to men, & how impossible soever it seem to be recovered. Let me in the uprightness of my heart propose some few things to you.

First, is not this a likely thing, that the Lord would have the reformation from popery perfected? If the Protestants did well to leave popery, then surely the more they leave it and come out of it, cannot but be acceptable to God: and the same Spirit which drew out of popery, will be drawing out of all the relics of it, and still bringing into a purer and more inward and spiritual worship? Now consider seriously of this matter, will you give God leave to draw his people out of whatever is left of popery in this nation? Will you forbear forcing of them to such things as they verily believe in their hearts to be a denial of Christ their Lord and Master? If you suppose such, or such a ministry and way of worship to be good, can you not enjoy it yourselves without forcing others (who cannot but from their hearts disown it in the sight of God) to submit to it, and to help to maintain it? how can they do this thing, and sin against the Lord? O do not strive, like *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat*, to make God's *Israel* to sin! The Lord God considers the sufferings of his people for his name's-sake. O *England* take heed of this thing, and do not hinder any in reforming either their lives or their worships, but at length amend this thing, which has been so long amiss in the government of this nation. The government of this nation has been gentle to the loose spirit, to the profane spirit; but hard to the strict spirit, even to that which fears to offend the Lord, let it now at length, after thus much desolation and distress, become gentle to that which fears the Lord, and more severe to that which is loose and profane. Surely he that governs under God, it becomes him to cherish that which is tender to God. And let the laws in this kind be considered of, and set strait for the encouragement of the good, and for the curbing of the unrighteous loose and profane spirit, that it may no longer thus swim on top, and abound in the nation, but be brought under.

2. Is not this also likely and a fitting thing, that the Lord God should have the leading & guidance of those whom he beget by his Spirit, and who are born thereof? Shall not the everlasting Father have the ordering and dispose of his own children, to whom he gives his Spirit to that very end, that they may be led by it, *Rom. 8.14. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes, and to where it goes: so is every one that is born of the spirit, John 3.8.* Now he that is begotten and brought forth by a free breath of the Spirit, shall not the same Spirit guide and lead him out of the world to the Father, out of the love of it, out of the customs, fashion, worships, and whole course of it? *They are not of the world* says Christ, *even as I am not of the world, John 17.16.* They walk not as men, or according to men, *I Cor. 3.3.* Indeed he that is Christ's is crucified with him, the man's part is slain, and he can walk no more as a man, but as one redeemed out of the earthly nature and spirit: therefore the world hates him, *John 17.14.* and is ready to crush and oppress him, *Gal. 4.29.* but this is not righteous before God, that his children and people should be hated, hunted and persecuted, because of their likeness to God by partaking of his image, and because of their obedience to his Spirit, which draws them out of all the unrighteousness of the world, yes and out of its righteousness too, that they may be found in the righteousness, faith, and obedience of God's Spirit in every thing.

3. Is it not fitting that the Lord should have and enjoy the worship of such, as he teaches and seeks to worship him in spirit and in truth? The worship in spirit and in truth is the Father's worship, that is the worship which he has appointed and chosen, and which he teaches his children, and such worshippers the Father seeks to worship him, *John* 4.23. men seek such worshippers, as will own their form and way of worship: but God seeks such as are born of his Spirit, and are willing to learn of him to worship him in spirit and in truth. God is a spirit, and such as worship him, must worship in his Spirit. *John* 4.24. and such as live to him, must live in his Spirit & such as walk with him must walk in his Spirit, *Gal.* 5.25. this is the true gospel religion, first to wait for the promise of the Spirit, and then to worship and walk with God in the Spirit. Now will you not allow God to enjoy the worship of his own people, into whose spirits he breaths life, and whom he forms and begets into his own likeness? Consider how provoking this must needs be to God, of what dangerous consequence this has been to the foregoing powers, and how dangerous it may prove to you.

4. Consider whether it be in your hearts to bring us back to *Egypt*, and whether you be able indeed so to do. It was a heavy yoke which we lay under by the government of *Episcopacy*, and our spirits cried and groaned to the Lord, and he did deliver us, and has brought us from under it. Now a power is risen up which has not felt nor known the burden of our spirits, nor been acquainted with our secret breathings & mournings to the Lord; nor seen his mighty hand in what he has done for us, and so you may easily be tempted to attempt either to bring us back into our old bondage, or to fall upon us and crush us. But if this be your aim and intent, it will soon prove your ruin: for the Lord God who has given you a day (and in whose hand your breath is, and before whom all your power is nothing) if he see you thus make use of it can soon put an end to it. What is all your visible strength before the invisible arm and power? Therefore be not high minded because you are outwardly so strong and invincible, but fear before him who is stronger, whose eyes run to and fro through the earth to behold the carriage of things, that he may be ready to stretch forth his arm for the saving of his people, when there is none left to help them.

5. Consider seriously and pray earnestly, that you may know what God has put this opportunity into your hands for; and do not seek the regaining of the earthly glory and greatness (which we know to be falling, that the Lord alone may be exalted, as the Scripture also has testified, *Isa.* 2.17.) but be sober and moderate as to that, and seek the glory of the immortal God who is to rise in the kingdoms of the earth over all (*Rev.* 11.15.) and seek righteousness, meekness, the peace, good and welfare of all, neither doing nor suffering to be done to any sort of persons, what you would not be willing to have done to you by them, if you were in their case, state and condition: and in any thing wherein you have been injured in the time of your sufferings and sore visitation by God's hand, though you may now blame, and seek to right yourselves on the instruments which God pleased to make use of to afflict you, yet it will be safer and better for you, if you can forgive.

These things belong to your peace, and by this means the Lord's favor may turn towards you, who cannot but dislike your beginnings: but if in a fleshly confidence because of your outward strength, you shall set yourselves against the work of the Lord, his cause and people, we can say to you in the dread of our God, *Who are you O great mountain?* We do not doubt but before the Fanner of *Babel* to see you made a plain, and are prepared in our Spirits to stand still to see the salvation of our God, whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, even when the enemy's strength, resolution and advantage is greatest.

*This is from one who has mourned for the oppressed, and because of the oppressions which have long abounded, praying to and waiting on the Lord for the good and prosperity of the nation in general, and for the bringing forth of that righteousness, fear of the Lord and true peace, which alone can make it happy.*

*Isaac Penington, the Younger*

## **SOME QUERIES CONCERNING THE WORK OF GOD IN THE WORLD**

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breakings forth of God's Wrath, both upon the People and Powers thereof**

**With an advertisement related to the present State of Things**

**[1660]**

Query 1. WHETHER the kingdoms of the earth shall not one day become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, wherein the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign, and man's glory and greatness fall, that God alone may be exalted in that day? Rev. 11:15,17. Isa. 2:11,12. 17:22.

Query 2. When shall this be? Whether this is not to be expected upon the recovery out of the anti-christian apostasy? Whether the man-child is not then to be expected to be so born and brought forth, as to rule all nations with a rod of iron? Rev. 19:6. and chap. 12:5.

Query 3. When the Son of man comes to take the government to himself, to give forth the law out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. 2:3. whether he shall find faith on the earth? Whether he shall find the kings and powers of the earth ready to receive him, and the professors willing to submit themselves unto him? Or whether they shall generally combine against him, and he be pressed to overcome them, before he can reign over them? Luke 18:8. Rev. 17:12,13,14. Psa. 2:2,3.

Query 4. Why these things may not be expected in this our day, and be already begun in this our nation, seeing so many strange things have happened among us, as have not in many foregoing ages: God having so strangely raised up a generation to do service for him, and so strangely again brought them down, when they had so long and so often showed themselves unworthy of, and unfit for, so great a service, by still seeking themselves, and forgetting the Lord that raised them!

Query 5. How the kingdoms of the earth are to become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ? Whether it be not by taking his yoke upon them, by submitting to his laws, his cords, and bands? By giving up whatsoever is unjust, unrighteous, harsh, and oppressive; and coming under the bands of

righteousness, meekness, and equity? Psalms 2:10,11. Matthew 11:29.

Query 6. Whether the Lord be arisen to shake terribly or no (as was long ago prophesied he should. Isaiah 2:19)? For the Lord will once more shake both heaven and earth. Hebrews 12:26. There has been a sore shaking in this nation: the foundations of government, yes, the very foundations of religion have been shaken, that that which cannot stand might be removed out of the way, and give place to that which cannot be shaken. ver. 27. Consider therefore whether these be the beginnings of the great and terrible day of the Lord God Almighty, or only some such ordinary shakings as used to happen according to the course of kingdoms and states, which are subject to changes, alterations, and dissettlement?

Query 7. When God begins to shake the heaven and earth in nations (according to that great shaking, which is to be after the anti-christian apostasy, Revelation 4. and chap. 16.) whether there ever can be any firm settlement again upon the old foundations? There may appear some hopes and probability of a settlement again, which man may be tempted to fasten upon; but this will but provoke God to shake more effectually: for when God once arises to shake, he will not give over till he has made that fall, which he began to shake. Revelation 11:13. *O England, take heed!*

Query 8. How the kings, powers, and nations of the earth may secure their standing in that day? Whether there be any way for them so to do, and what is that way? Whether there be any other way but kissing the Son, submitting to his bands, being willing to be bound with the chains of righteousness, love, and meekness, from all unrighteousness and oppression, both relating to their fellow-creatures and to his people? Psalms 2:12. and 159:8.

Come, O nation of England, be bound! O powers of this nation, take the Lord's yoke upon you; seek righteousness, seek meekness, seek the good of all; not in words and pretenses, but in truth and uprightness. Seek out that which is of God in every one of your hearts, and let that govern for God. Do not smite any for obedience to the living God, but come you also under his yoke, that what is not of God in yourselves, but an enemy to your souls, may be yoked down; and let all laws be formed, directed, and managed, to reach the unrighteous, that the rod of the wicked may not always lie upon the lot of the righteous, Psalms 125:3. nor oppression and self-will sit in the seat of judgment, and pass (because of its power and authority) for righteousness. Ecclesiastes 3:16. and 4:1. O you powers of England! save yourselves and this nation from the terrible stroke of God, which is very near. And let not this following advice be disdained by you, but consider seriously of it.

*Take heed how you call any to account for what they have done against you.* There was an extraordinary hand of God in these things; and in falling foul upon instruments, you may clash against him before you are aware. For their iniquity the Lord has laid them aside, and raised you up again, giving you another day of trial; let that suffice, and look now to your own standing, that you also do not fall by following their example of iniquity and unrighteousness. But if you will call them to account for any thing, let it be for being unfaithful to God and the people of this nation, to whom they made large promises, but performed little. And that which God required of them (and the nation had reason to expect from them) do you now perform. Give all men the liberty of their consciences towards God; let them follow him out of the fashions, customs, and worships of the world without interruption; and let there also be a narrow search after what is unjust, unrighteous, and oppressive in any kind; and as fast

as it is discovered let it be removed, that the nation may grow out of vanity, out of unrighteousness, into solidity and righteousness; and that the fear of offending man may not affright any from fearing, obeying, and worshipping of God in Spirit and truth, as he requires; and then God will bless this nation and the powers of it. For the Lord God takes not pleasure in overturning of nations, or breaking in pieces the powers thereof: yet if they will by no means hearken, but harden their hearts, and stand in the way of his counsel and design, he cannot spare them. Isa. 27:4. Therefore stand not in battle against him, but bow before him, O you great ones of the earth! become low and little, that his wrath may pass by you; let go your own strength and greatness, and take hold of his strength, that you may make peace with him, ver. 5. and do not go about to limit the Spirit of God in his people; that will most certainly ruin you! The Lord God has begun to bestow his Spirit upon his sons and daughters, as in days of old, even as before the great apostasy and erring from it; and he requires their obedience to it; and who may safely forbid or punish them therefore. Much lies upon this land in this respect; oh, do not add more, lest you sink the nation and yourselves! Now a little to help the nation and powers thereof the better to digest the work of God, that they may not run on headily against him to their own ruin and destruction, let these two things following be considered.

1. Whether the people of God, in the days of the apostles, were not a separated people; a people gathered out of nations, kindreds, tongues, and languages, (gathered out of the Jewish worship, gathered out of the Heathenish worship) and separated to God?
2. Whether, after the anti-christian apostasy, there are not a people to be gathered again, and separated again, from all anti-christian ways of worship, even after the manner as they were before the apostasy from the Heathenish and Jewish worship? And so the same gospel which gathered at first, is, after the apostasy, to be preached to gather men again. Rev. 14:6,7.

Consider well of these things, that you may not set yourselves against the Lord, to cross him in this work in this nation. You cannot hinder him from gathering his people now out of the apostatized state, no more than the Jews or Heathens could hinder him from gathering his elect then out of their corrupt states. The reformation out of popery was very weak and imperfect; the Lord waited long for the perfecting of it; but instead thereof, there was rather a running backwards towards it again. The Lord has now at length begun the work himself, letting forth his Spirit upon his people, and gathering many into it, and is preparing the stones of his temple for his building, and he will assuredly build up his church again; you cannot possibly stop him herein: you may break yourselves by attempting to remove this burdensome stone out of your way (for indeed it does lie something offensively in the way of all settlements and governments according to the fleshly wisdom); but it will fall upon and break all that burden themselves with it, though not by outward might or power, yet by that Spirit of life and righteousness which is in it, which the Lord is with to prosper. Consider these things in meekness, righteousness, and in the fear of the Lord; even in that Spirit which is fit to act for God, and not against him.

### **AN ADVERTISEMENT TO THE POWERS AND PEOPLE OF THIS NATION**

BECAUSE of my dear love to my native country, and because of the dregs of that cup which the Lord has already caused it to drink of, which cannot be spared unless the Lord's will be effected without it; which dregs are so bitter, terrible, and dreadful, as will make the stout hearts to faint, and the most

confident countenance wax pale: I say, for this cause, in love am I constrained to add these few lines more, that, if it be possible, this nation may apply itself, in the fear and dread of the eternal majesty and power, to make its peace with him against whom it has long warred (not only by much outward wickedness, looseness, vanity, and profaneness, but more especially by setting up an invented form of godliness, and persecuting the power), and to whom it is not yet reconciled in this matter, nor found so much as willing to be reconciled.

The Lord God of heaven and earth, of glory, of majesty, of everlasting power, victory, and dominion over all, who made both heaven and earth, and has the command of all things therein, he disposes of nations, of governments, of earthly powers according to his pleasure, and who may say unto him, what do you? Who may implead him for making a rich nation poor, a strong nation weak, or for bringing down the high and mighty, the strong, stout, honorable, and noble in a nation, and exalting the poor, the mean, the persecuted? And if he turn his hand again, and lay them flat whom he had lifted up, and exalt the other even unlooked-for, who can withstand him, or who can contradict him?

Now what is in the Lord's heart (who is thus mighty and absolute) he will certainly bring to pass, how unlikely, how contrary, how impossible soever it seem to the eye of man. If he will exalt his despised truth (which always was so to the eye of the great and wise ones of this world), or give his people liberty to fear, worship, and obey him; if he will have truth and righteousness have the dominion in men's hearts, and in the nations, and not in the wills and lusts of men, how great and powerful soever; I say, if this be his intent, though generation should rise up after generation to oppose him herein, yet will he be too hard for them all, and they will all fall before him: and his truth, his people, his holy, eternal counsel will he raise up, and cause to triumph over them all.

It is man's way to settle himself by outward strength against outward strength, and then he thinks he is safe; not eying the invisible hand which turns the wheels, and delights to overturn that which is outwardly strong (and seems unremovable), when it forgets him, and opposes itself against him. The Lord God loves to take his enemies at the strongest, when they are most wise, most mighty, even when nothing seems able to deal with them but himself. This was it overthrew the foregoing powers one after another; they were courting worldly interest, and strengthening themselves that way; but overlooking God who raised them, and the work which he had raised them to accomplish. This turned the hand against them which had been for them, and how then could they maintain their standing?

Oh! that the present generation could see the ticklishness of their standing, and consider that this is their day of trial, and that the Lord's eye is upon them, to observe their ways, to see whether they will now mind righteousness, and the liberty of his people better than formerly they did; and that his truth may, in its life and power (and not in such a form or way of worship as they may think good to prescribe), have its scope in the nation. The Lord's eye and heart is upon his truth, and upon his people; and as nations or powers deal with that, so will he deal with them. Oh! therefore be not deceived; for though the Lord has often-times long suffered his people to lie under reproach and persecution (as he did Israel in Egypt for several ages), yet at length he has still heard their groans, and has arisen to deliver them: and though Pharaoh afterwards with all his strength went after them, and made no question but to bring them back again under his subjection (and there was nothing in appearance able to deliver them from him), yet he could not, but overthrew himself and his strength utterly. You know not what strong cries and tears were put up to the Lord before these late changes,

that righteousness might be established in the nation, and that his people might have liberty to worship him in his fear, and according to the leadings of his Spirit, without being yoked under any form of worship which their hearts could not own to be of God. And when the Long Parliament was unexpectedly raised up, that was looked upon by many to have been the means God would have used towards the effecting of this: and we cannot deny but that God did make use of them in some things for good, for which his name was honored. But though that instrument did warp, becoming unfaithful to the Lord, diverting from his work and service, towards the seeking and establishing of themselves and their own interests, and so are at length themselves justly therefore fallen; yet the work of the Lord is not fallen, as relating to himself; though, because of the unfaithfulness and self-seeking of the instruments which he began to use, at present it lies under much reproach (and that justly as relating to them); yet, for all this, the Lord himself can bring it about again, and carry it on with better advantage to his name, truth, and people, than if it had gone on in their hand: and the more men set themselves to oppose it, the more glory will God get to himself in effecting it.

Let not, therefore, my true love to the nation, and to the present powers thereof, be despised by them; but let them fear before the mighty God of heaven and earth, and in their hearts bow to him, that they may be humbled, and made fit instruments in his hand for his service, and not be found enemies against him. If they will be fit instruments for God to work by, they must be meek, lowly, poor in spirit, waiting in God's fear for his counsel, and not hearken to the fleshly wisdom of man, which is his utter enemy, and will persuade, advise, and instruct them to settle the nation and church (as they call it) in a way contrary to him. And remember this word: *Be sure you smite none for obedience to God. Limit not his Holy Spirit in his people; but limit the unclean and evil spirit in those who manifest themselves not to be his people.* This is the true intent of government. How can he who governs aright under God, hurt that which is of God, and for God? Or how can he spare that which his sword is given him to cut down? Oh, how happy were it for the nation, if they would let truth have its scope, and let righteousness overcome them! and not contend for shadows against the substance; but let the substance overcome all those shadows which have held it in bondage, and upheld its enemy.

The great enemy of God, all this night of the apostasy, has been antichrist; who has not been an open enemy only, but has appeared as if he had been for Christ, commanding the worshipping and honoring of Christ, yes, and with a great zeal taking upon him to cause people to worship according to what he determined to be right: and thus he gets into the temple, erecting a usurping authority over the conscience, setting up and compelling to an invented worship.

Against this kind of worship God has still been raising witnesses: but he having the powers of the earth on his side (as was prophesied he should, Rev. 17:13), has often prevailed over them. Rev. 13:7. And so the truth has been suppressed, and false worships set up by the powers of the earth, according to the proportion they have drunk of the golden cup of fornication; which does not only deceive in one way of manifest and gross false worship, but has many mixtures and mysteries of deceit in it. Rev. 17:2, etc.

Now God has a time to call for an account of the sufferings and blood of his saints. Rev. 6:10,11. He has a time to judge the great whore. Rev. 17:1. And when the time of God's judgment comes upon the earth, God begins with his own house first, and so with that which has taken upon it to separate from Babylon, to see what he can find of Babylon therein; and he will judge that before he fall upon the great body of the mystery of iniquity. 1 Pet. 4:17. Heb. 10:30.

Now, therefore, it behoves this nation to consider what of Babylon may be found in it, and to part with it, that it may escape the plagues of Babylon, Rev. 18:4. which are very bitter, as ver. 7,8,etc. these are the two main things whereof Babylon is guilty:

1. An invented form of worship, a likeness of the true worship; but not the true worship itself.
2. A persecuting and endeavoring to suppress the power of the truth, even of the purity of the godly religion and worship, by means of this form; because for conscience' sake, men, who are taught otherwise by the spirit of God, cannot submit and subject thereto.

This God is coming down to plead with in that great city, Babylon; and this God will first plead with in you, O England! Consider what of this is yet remaining in you (or what of this your heart hankers after), and part with it as you love your peace. The Lord is the witness of the integrity and fidelity of my heart to you in these lines. It will be hard for you to escape the Lord's hand; yet it is not impossible. If you bow before the mighty God, and lie abased in spirit at his feet, he can open that eye in you which can let you see your danger, and also the way how to escape it.

I. P.



# **THE CONSIDERATION OF A POSITION CONCERNING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER**

**AS ALSO**

**OF SOME PARTICULARS HELD FORTH FOR TRUTHS, BY ONE EDMUND ELLIS,  
STYLED A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

**WITH**

**A WARNING OF TENDER BOWELS TO THE RULERS, TEACHERS, AND PEOPLE OF  
THIS NATION, CONCERNING THEIR CHURCH AND MINISTRY**

**LIKEWISE**

**A few Words concerning the Kingdom, Laws, and Government of CHRIST in the Heart and  
Conscience; its Inoffensiveness to all just laws and governments of the kingdoms of men**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he  
walk naked, and they see his shame. Rev. 16:15.**

**[1660]**

## **PREFACE**

CHRIST, the eternal Son of God, the substance of all the types and shadows of the law, was made a priest to God, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. He came in the power of the Father; he received the power, he ministered the power, and in the power. Thus he gathered together living stones, built them into a living temple for the Father of life to dwell in, that they may be filled with the power, dwell in the power, and be to the glory of the power. The church of Israel, the church of the Old Testament, the church of Moses, was gathered by the letter, was to be ordered by the letter, was to keep and observe the law of the letter, was to have priests and sacrifices according to the letter; but the New Testament church was to be of true Jews, of Jews gathered in the power, circumcised by the power, renewed in the power, etc. So that he is not a Jew any longer, who is one outward, nor that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit, and not in the letter. We are the circumcision, says the apostle, which worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. The New Testament state is a state of substance, even of that spiritual substance which the law held out in shadows. The Jew is inward, the circumcision inward, the sacrifices inward, the church inward,

the ministry inward, the worship inward: all is in spirit, in life, in power, in virtue; the whole state is answerable to the High-priest of our profession, even after the power of the endless life. By the eternal Spirit was he made a minister, by it he preached, ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel," etc. Luke 4:18.) "through it he offered up himself a sacrifice without spot to God." Heb. 9:14. And in the same power runs the vein of the whole dispensation of the gospel; for it is a ministration of the Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:8. Take away the life, take away the Spirit; you take away the stones of this building; you take away the church; you take away the ministry; you take away all.

Now about this inward building there was an outward court, which had its being, state, and honor from the presence of the inward life. The virtue of the inward building did cast a reflection, and bring forth an outward state (as it cannot but do, wherever it appears in its riches and glory). This state stood firm in the days of the apostles, till God's measuring and removing of his temple, altar, and worshippers, and his giving up of the outward court (it having lost the life and virtue, which flowed into it from the temple, while the temple remained within it) to the Gentiles; who under the Gospel are such as are uncircumcised in spirit, and can worship in the outward court without the Spirit.

The enemy indeed fought hard against the life and power, but he could not there prevail; the gates of hell could not prevail against the true church, which brought forth the man-child, nor against the man-child whom she brought forth; but the man-child was caught up to God, and the woman fled into the wilderness. Then that church-state, and worship, which depended upon their presence, was dissolved; for how could it be otherwise, when both the man-child, which was the head of the church (from which the virtue, life, and influence did flow into the whole body), and the woman (or church) herself also were both gone out of sight? So that the ministry of eternal life, and the temple, wherein the life was ministered, being both removed, they are neither of them henceforward to be found in that place, where they were beheld before (and where most eyes would be ready to look for them again), but there where the Spirit had hid them.

Now mark diligently, what kind of esteem the true church has had in the world ever since her disrobing herself of her outward garments, and flight into the wilderness, and how her true seed have been handled. The dragon immediately casts a flood after her; her beautiful raiment being put off, and she clothed in the habit of a widow, the eye of the world could no longer see and acknowledge her to be the church, but disdain, reproach, revile her. This is her lot all the days of antichrist; she is misrepresented by the dragon's flood of reproaches, and looked upon as a strumpet, as one that pretends to Christ for her Lord and husband, to his spirit, to his kingdom, to his truth, without a just right; and the remnant of her seed are still made war with by the dragon. Who have been the hunted ones, the hated, the persecuted in all nations, but the tender-conscienced, who receive the law of Christ into their hearts, bowing to him in their worship and conduct, and dare not bow or worship according to the doctrines and commandments of men?

Now the true church, or temple, being thus removed, the outward court becomes the habitation and place of worship among the Gentiles, all the time of the church's abode in the wilderness. The Spirit of the Lord having left it, the Heathenish spirit (man's earthly nature and wisdom), the spirit of antichrist, enters into it, and upholds the form of the former building (so far as it judges necessary), and here it is found worshipping, and making a great show of holiness and devotion, but in the mean time makes war with the true worshippers, who cannot worship in the outward court (since the Spirit

of the Lord has left it, and given it to the Gentiles), but follow the church into the wilderness, and worship in that temple which God has removed there.

Oh! where is the eye which can read these things, as they are written either in the letter, or in the Spirit. Antichrist is a mystery of iniquity, which works, and gets up, and reigns, under an appearance of godliness; and he that will discern him, and his false ways of worship, must have that eye which sees beyond the appearance of things, into their nature: and in this is the discovery of him, and the redemption from him. And happy is he, who is not "defiled with women," but abides in the true *virginity*, expecting and preparing for the appearance of the bridegroom.

### **THE CONSIDERATION OF A POSITION etc.**

THERE is a position laid down in some printed letters, concerning the use of the Common-Prayer-book, tendered by one Edm. Ellis (who professes himself to be a minister of Jesus Christ) to Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Ford (as he styles them); against which position he entreats me, if I find upon my spirit any thing to be objected against it, to discover it in exact and punctual expressions. This desire of his is set down in print after the letters.

His position, or assertion, is this: "That a man may worship God in Spirit and in truth, in the use of that form of prayer for morning and evening, which we call the Common-Prayer."

Now whoever would weigh this assertion aright, must have the balance of the sanctuary, and must put it into the scale with an equal hand; and then looking with that eye, which is given to see the mysteries of the kingdom of God, to him who is born of God, the truth or error of it is easily discerned.

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

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof; but can not tell from where it comes, and where it goes; 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 thus begotten, needs nourishment, needs the divine warmth, the breasts of consolation, the clothing of the Spirit, the garment of salvation; needs the bread of life to feed on; needs the water of life to drink; needs strength against the enemy's assaults, wisdom against his snares and temptations; needs the arm of the Deliverer to preserve and carry on the work of redemption daily; needs faith to deny the fleshly wisdom, that so he may trust and feel the virtue of the arm of the Deliverer; needs hope, patience, meekness, a clear guidance, an upright heart to follow after the Lord; yes, very many are the daily needs of that which is begotten by the breath of God, in its state of weakness, until it be 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 sense of these needs for his supply; that is prayer; no, though it be but a groan, or sigh, which cannot be uttered, or expressed; yet that is prayer, true prayer, which has an acceptance with the Lord, and receives a gracious answer from him. And he that begets the child, 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, yes, and the snares he is privily laying, and he feels his own weakness to withstand or escape: and in this sense his heart cries to the Father of spirits for preservation; for him to stand by him; 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 feeling the breath of its nature issuing out from the principle of life in it to the living spring, which is the Father of it; who by causing his virtues to spring up in it, nourishes it to everlasting life.

But now, man who is not born of the Spirit, but (by conceiving some of the truths of God in the wisdom from below) has attained to some change of opinion and conduct, he pretends to be this birth from above; though indeed he is born but "of bloods," or "of the will of the flesh," or "of the will of man," John 1:13. and what God begets in, and gives to, his true child, he will be imitating, though he be out of the nature and spirit where the true child is begotten, and where the true gift of the Father is received by him. He will be believing, though he has not received any proportion of the living faith from the hand of the Father; he will be forming repentance and sorrow for sin: though his heart be not turned from it; he will be hoping in God's mercy, although he be both from off the foundation, and from under the shadow of the mercy-seat; and he will be praying, though he has neither received the Spirit, nor been taught by the Spirit to pray; and so being from that which should guide him, and teach him the truth and way of worship as it is in Jesus, he runs out into the inventions and imaginations, and sets up a way of his own choosing; which he having much considered of, and beat out by reasonings, and fenced about with arguments, he grows wise in his own eyes, and now verily believes it to be the way of God, and that he is able to maintain it against all opposers. Thus one man, he is for a form; another man, he is against a form, and for conceived prayers; and each thinks himself able to maintain his own, and to overthrow the other. But oh, that that ear were open which can hear the truth! that where there is any true, honest, upright desire after God, from the simplicity of the heart, it might not be thus betrayed through the subtlety of the fleshly wisdom, which lies lurking in the wise, reasoning, knowing part, 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. Here is no learning to pray aright, to believe aright, to hope aright, to mourn aright, to rejoice aright, etc., but this wisdom must be brought to nothing, 1 Cor. 1:19. and a man must become a child to all knowledge, as let in this way; and he that so becomes 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 ability to sigh or groan (if he give no more, he accepts that). Sometimes he gives strong breathings and plenty of words to pour out the soul in before the Lord. But if a man should catch those words, and lay them up against another time, and offer them up to God in his own will, this would be but will-worship and abomination. This I have known experimentally, and have felt the wrath of God for it. That is prayer, which comes fresh from the Spirit; and that is a true desire, which the Spirit begets; but the affections and sparks of man's kindling please not the Lord, nor do they conduce to the soul's rest, but will end in the bed of sorrow. Isa. 1:11.

Now as touching the Book of Common Prayer, or prayers conceived without the immediate breathings

of the Spirit, I shall speak mine own experience faithfully, which is this; I have felt both these ways draw out 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 affects, hurt the precious life, and thicken the veil of death over the soul, keeping that part alive which separates from God; which part must die ere the soul can live.

The true prayer is by that which God begets in the virtue of his Spirit, ("praying always in the Spirit," Ephes. 6:18. Jude 20) in the time he chooses: for the Spirit breathes as well when he wishes, as where he wishes; and man cannot limit him when he shall breathe, or when he shall not breathe; but is to wait the season of his 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 he 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 grows in the true disciple. He believes, he hopes, he waits, he prays, he mourns, he rejoices, he obeys, etc., in the cross to the mortal part; not as man's wisdom teaches, or would teach, or can teach any of these things; for his sacrifice is still an abomination, even to the wise Egyptian part in himself; (O wise man! abase yourself before the Lord in his Spirit, that you may read this and live!) but as the life teaches, as the wisdom from above teaches, which breaks down, shuts up, confounds and destroys man's wisdom, while he is teaching his babe.

Thus have I answered in the simplicity of my heart, to the nature of the thing, so far as the Lord has pleased to draw forth my spirit; and in sinking down to that, which thus opened my spirit, my answer may easily be read and assented to: but to that which is in the disputing wisdom, out of the feeling of the hidden life and virtue, it may prove a mystery.

Afterwards he also entreats me to peruse seriously, and to lay deeply to heart (in the real fear and dread of the great God), some particulars which he teaches for truths.

I perceive he is offended at the questioning of his ministry, and that the main intent of his proposing these is to justify his ministry; which if they were true, yet the preaching of them would not prove him, or any man else, to be a minister of Jesus Christ: for it is not preaching things that are true which makes a true minister; but the receiving of his 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 themselves though they 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. 28:18,19. yet this was not sufficient to make them able ministers of the New Testament; but, before they went abroad to preach, they were to wait for the power; Acts 1:4,8. and when they had received it, they were to minister in it, that men might be converted to the power, and by the power, that the faith of persons 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. And this was it made Paul minister 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 out of the life, out of the power, and so he should convert men to the wisdom of the words he spake, and not to the power. ver. 2,3. This was it he was sent for, 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 this he was careful of in his ministry, that men might not run away with his words, and miss of the thing. And 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, 20. Many men might catch their words, and run away with them, and preach them; but they could not minister in the power. Now the kingdom which the gospel ministers are the preachers of, 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, this 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: but in bringing men to the feeling 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: and that he may 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 must be sure, in his ministering, to keep in the power, or he will never win others to the power: but in keeping in the power, while he is ministering and 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; in thus ministering he shall save his own soul, and those that hear him, even all who in fear and meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save the soul. For alas, 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, which alone converts and keeps alive unto God! Oh, how many souls are to be answered for by them, who take upon them 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 a heart to consider! You shepherds of England, little do you know what is towards you.

Now for those things themselves, which he says "he principally endeavors to make known to the sons of men," there is a mixture in them; which, if he could singly apply himself to wait on the Lord in the meek, sober spirit, out of the consultations, wisdom, and confidence of the flesh, it might please the Lord to make manifest to him.

The first particular of those, which he lays down for truths is, "that the good things of this life, honors, riches, etc., unless we make use of them in the service of God, are but vanity and vexation of spirit; and in no wise any more capable to satisfy or content an immortal soul, than lime, and ashes, and cobwebs, and such-like trash, are to satisfy and keep in health the bodies of those persons, who, through the depravedness of their appetite, desire to feed on them.

Answer. 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, which 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 love 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, but 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 garb, behavior, and appearance in it; not enjoying any thing as the world enjoys; not using any thing as the world uses; not honoring men, or receiving honor from men, as the world gives or receives honor; but honoring men in the Lord, and receiving honor from the Lord: and whatever they seem to retain of the earthly things, they hold as steward under the Lord; not using or disposing of them, as they think good, but waiting for the discovery of the Master's pleasure, who is to order, in his counsel and wisdom, all that is his own, to his own glory. The law requires 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 any thing back, cannot be a disciple; cannot be a soldier of Christ; but must needs *entangle himself with the affairs of this life*. This is sound and savory, even the truth of Jesus, as it is known and felt in the renewed spirit; but his words, if he measure them in the pure light of God, he will perceive not to have sprung from there; but to have been formed in the earthly wise part; even in that wisdom, understanding, and comprehension, which is shut out of the mysteries of God's kingdom.

For his second, "That nothing but the enjoyment of God, the fountain of all goodness, can truly and really content an immortal soul." And for his third, "That no man can enjoy God, but he that loves him with all his heart, and with all his soul, (and for his sake) his neighbor as himself." I own both the things themselves, and these words, and I felt a good savor in them at the reading of them: only let me say this, if he put men upon striving after these things, without pointing them to the gift where the strength is received to perform, and where the waiting is to be for the strength, he cannot preach them profitably to his hearers.

To his fourth, "That though every sincere convert, or regenerate person, loves God continually with his whole heart, as to the habit or root of holy love; yet while he is in the body, he may sometimes fail of the act or fruit of it, and may offend God through the love of the creature. Which truth (so much opposed in these days) is clear and manifest in the holy Scriptures; particularly in the records of the heinous sins of the prophet David, and Peter, the apostle."

Answer. 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 is daily purifying thereof, fulfilling the good pleasure of his goodness therein, and carrying 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. Now that the corrupt tree shall never be cut down while man is in the body, that the heart shall never be thoroughly circumcised to love the Lord, but be in danger of "offending God through the love of the creature," this doctrine and belief springs not from the pure fountain of life and power; but the reasoning part has gathered it from its conceptions beneath the power.

The seed of God cannot sin (for as he is pure which begets, so is that pure which is begotten of him): nor can man sin, who is born of it, and abides in it: and if God please to perfect the birth and the work of circumcision, what can hinder a man from being wholly born from it, and from abiding in it? Indeed a man that strives in his own strength, either against sin, or towards holiness, may well doubt of ever having it accomplished: but he that feels the eternal power beginning the work, and carrying it on daily, cannot doubt but he can perfect it; yes, and is encouraged (by the feeling thereof) to hope and wait on him for the perfecting of it.

As for his instances of David and Peter, they reach not the thing: for though David and Peter did fall; yet both David and Peter might attain a higher state before they went out of the body, than they were in before they fell. David was a great prophet, and Peter a precious disciple; but yet there was a higher estate to be administered, even the receiving that which the prophets prophesied of, and which the disciple was to wait for. The disciples who had known Christ, and had been taught by him, and had received a commission from him, to whom all power in heaven and earth was given, yet were to wait for a further and higher state, even for receiving "the promise of the Father, the power from on high," that he that was with them might be in them. John 14:17. John was as great as any prophet, and yet he that was least in the kingdom was greater than he. Read the Acts of the Apostles. Behold what a precious people was brought forth, even in the beginning of the apostles' ministry; how full of faith, how stripped of the world, how single-hearted to God, and one towards another! Acts 2:42, etc. and Acts 4:32. etc. What would these be, abiding and growing up in the vine? The cutting off of sin is necessary while in the body; but to make the committing of sin necessary while in the body, is a great derogation to the power of God's grace, and to the mystery of faith, which overcomes the evils of the heart, and the worldly nature within; purifies the conscience from dead works, and is "held in the pure conscience." Oh that men knew the power, and the faith which stands in the power! for then would they not judge it so impossible to be cleansed by the faith through the power. Oh, that light, that pure light of the Spirit, wherein the living blood runs, which cleanses from all sin, and keeps clean them that abide and walk in it! If this were but a little felt, such doctrines as these (which are gathered in the comprehension from words read, without being let into the thing itself) would soon vanish, and find no place in the heart where the power dwells, nor in the understanding which is renewed, preserved, and fed by the power. For the things of God are to be known and held in the understanding which is given of God (which understanding is of the Spirit, and is spiritual), and not with the natural understanding, which cannot receive the things of the Spirit, but only a carnal apprehension and sense



of the words of the Spirit, according as a man can beat them out with, and comprehend them in, his reasoning part.

To the fifth, "That the souls of the faithful are always growing in grace, while they are in the body; and at the instant of death, or separation from the body, our Lord Jesus shall present them to the Father, without spot or blemish."

Answer. Christ presents to the Father, when he has purified the heart and mind, and made it fit for God's pure life and presence. He has received the fulness from the Father, and has freely given of his grace and of his truth to the sons of men, to regenerate them, to cleanse and sanctify their hearts, and make them fit for God to dwell in. He sits in his temple as "a refiner and purifier of silver," (who is like "a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap") and when he has purified his disciples, his children, his Levites, he presents them to the Lord, for the Lord to tabernacle and dwell in: when he has thoroughly consecrated them, he presents them as kings and priests to his Father, to offer up "an offering in righteousness," and to reign with him in his kingdom. Mal. 3:3. Rev. 1:5. And there were some so purified by the leaven of the kingdom (which purges out the old leaven by degrees, even till at length it has made the lump wholly new), that to them all things were pure. Titus 1:5. There were some "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." Heb. 12:22,23,24. Thus it was before the apostasy; yes, and after the apostasy there were some found standing on "Mount Zion" again, such as had learned the "new song;" such as "were redeemed from the earth;" such as "were not defiled with women," (with any of the false churches, or their false ways of worship) but had kept their virginity in the wilderness. If you would know who these were, they were the "first-fruits unto God and the Lamb" after the apostasy, who were thoroughly cleansed by the spirit of burning, insomuch as "in their mouth was found no guile," but "they were without fault before the throne of God." Rev. 14:1-6.

The work of the Spirit of Christ in the heart is an inward work, and does not consist in outward times or seasons, but in spiritual degrees and seasons; which when they are finished, the heart renewed, the spirit changed, the work wrought out: then the glory of the Father is revealed, the entrance into the everlasting kingdom ministered, and then there is a sitting down in the everlasting mansion, even with Christ in the heavenly places which he has prepared; where they that are redeemed, and purged, and sanctified, sit together with him: and as the body cannot hinder his entering into the spirits of his saints, and his dwelling in them, no more can it hinder their entering into him and dwelling in him.

Now there are several exercises of spirit, several measures of faith, and several degrees of life and glory. Some are under the clouds, some in the sea; some in Egypt, some in the wilderness; some waiting for his appearance, some in the enjoyment of him already appeared. In some the work of regeneration, of sanctification, of newness of spirit and life is but begun; in others it is interrupted, and they come to a loss; in some it is much carried on, even towards consummation; and some are already "complete in him;" finding fulness of satisfaction in him, (in whom the everlasting springs are opened, to the full content of their hearts) and bring forth fruit to him, to the full content and satisfaction of his heart. In the apostles' days there were those that waited for his coming, and there were those also that knew him come, and had received the good understanding from him, and were "in the eternal life." 1

John 5;20.

Yet this does not exclude growth, for the fulness is infinite; and though a perfect state may be attained in the perfect gift, yet there is a growth in the perfection (for Christ who was perfect, and in whom was no guile, grew in wisdom, and knowledge, and in favor with God and men). And as God is infinite, so to that which is transplanted into him, there is no end of growth in him: but the tree, which stands in God's holy earth, by his pure river of waters, shall grow forever and ever into his endless life and fulness.

To his sixth, "That no man can so know God as to love him with all his heart, and with all his soul, but through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified: who, by those grievous sufferings which he endured when he was upon earth, made satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of all those that believe in his name; so that it is as consistent with the justice, as with the mercy of God, to forgive them their sins, and make them heirs of eternal life. God is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus."

Answer. The knowledge of Christ is life eternal, and in his cross is the spiritual virtue, which cuts off the uncircumcision of the heart, whereby it is enabled to love the Lord. Now "Christ is the Lord from heaven, the quickening Spirit," who sows the seed of the kingdom in the heart, and causes it to spring up; out of which seed the faith, the love, the hope, the meekness, the patience, and every spiritual fruit springs and grows. And he that is thus born of this seed, and receives the knowledge of life which springs from this seed, he cannot but love him which begat him, and he reaps the fruit of all that Christ did and suffered in that prepared body; and God is both just, and the justifier of him who is thus united to Jesus. But that man who knows not this faith nor is acquainted with the love which springs from this root, and which is of this divine nature, but thinks to be justified by applying to himself what is related in the histories concerning Christ; this man deceives his soul, and misses of the true justification; for God is just, who has made the promise sure to the seed, and has shut out man, further than he is born of the seed, and found in the seed. But he who abides in the seed, and in whom the seed finds pleasure and abides; he cannot miss of the promise, of the everlasting righteousness, the reconciliation, the peace, the joy, and whatever else God gives to the seed.

To his seventh and last, "That the ready way to receive Christ, the only light, by which we may see the way to heaven; or so to believe in him that we may be saved by him; is to forsake all that we have, that we may be his disciples: that is to say, to take off our affections from things on the earth, and to set them on things above, where Jesus sits on the right hand of God; putting our trust and confidence in the free and in the infinite mercy of God, through Christ; to be guided by him in all our ways, to be led by his good Spirit in all those ways of grace and holiness, through which we must pass before we can attain to glory."

Answer. 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 free openings of love, to feel its living virtue, and in that virtue to give up all that is of the earthly nature and spirit; to 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 it is the doing of things in the virtue, in the life, in the power which comes from Christ, which is of acceptance with God, and 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 differences it from all men's imitations, and from all the likenesses which the earthly spirit can frame, is the nature and virtue of the root being found in it. Therefore he that will be a true Christian, must eye Christ, the spring of his life, and keep in the feeling 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 all along refused! The builders before the coming of Christ, they got a knowledge concerning the Messiah to come; but being unacquainted with the thing itself, rejected both it at its coming, and also the vessel wherein it appeared. And the builders, all along the apostasy, got a knowledge of Christ 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 every appearance of it. Christ can no more now appear in Spirit, than formerly he could in that prepared body of flesh, but the wise builders now are as ready to cry out against him for a blasphemer, a profaner of God's ordinances, a deceiver of the people (yes, a witch, or one that has a devil), as the wise builders then were. "But wisdom" in all ages "is justified by her children," and of none else. He that is born of the wisdom, he can discern the womb, and own the fruit and branchings forth thereof under the mean, 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; nor can any now know it by any observations which they can gather out of the apostles' writings; but by being born of that Spirit whereof they were born, and by being formed in that womb wherein they were formed, by this means alone is the thing come to be known which they knew. He that receives the same eye, sees the same thing, according to his measure; and coming to the life, wherein they received the truth; the words which they spake concerning the truth are easy. Thus as they were written in the Spirit, so are they there alone truly read; and being so read, they become exceeding profitable to that which so reads them; 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 Babel, which the eternal life and power will throw down (whenever he appears) with that which built it. Oh that men were wise to wait for the discovery of the true rock, and of the true builder upon that rock! that that city and building might be raised in them, which God alone can rear; that they might not be left desolate and miserable in that stormy day, which will shake all buildings and foundations and rocks, but our Rock; wherein all professors, and preachers, and high notionists, and whatever sort else can be named (who have stumbled at God's living truth, and at the pure appearance of his redeeming power, which, in this age, has mightily broken forth, after the long, dark night of apostasy, to the sight of every eye which is opened in the Spirit), shall confess with tears, sorrow, anguish, and shame, that *their rock is not as our rock, they themselves being judges*. For though all sorts of professors generally own Christ as the rock in words, yet most miss of the thing; and the subtle enemy has made use of a notion, or apprehension of the thing in the carnal mind, to deceive them of the thing, to keep 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, by a believing of what Christ did, of a satisfaction he made for them while he was here on earth, though they lie in the pit all their days, though they carry the body of sin about 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; yet hope to be saved in the end, and to be presented without spot or wrinkle to God! 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 feels the saving virtue of it; but he that effectually feels the virtue, he indeed knows the name, and can bow at the name, feeling his lusts and enemies bowed under by the power thereof, and that raised up in him, which can worship the Father in the Spirit and in the truth. Oh that the sons of men knew; oh that the teachers and professors of this age knew, 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 please to smite any one's earthly wisdom and comprehension (which is the main thing which stands in the way of the pure openings and revelations of the life), and give him the feeling of any thing here written, let him in fear acknowledge the Lord, sacrificing to his goodness, and waiting upon him to be kept in that feeling, not magnifying or vilifying any of his instruments; but in meekness and humility embracing the instructions of the Almighty, from the hand which he pleases to give them forth by. As for me, I am but a shell; and if this party knew me (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 this I must by no means deny, that the pure liquor of the eternal life, at its pleasure springs up and issues out through me; though I can also, in true understanding, say, that it issues out far oftener, and much more abundantly through others. Let it have its honor, wherever it appears! and the Lord bring down that in people's hearts, which hinders the owning and receiving of its virtue.

### **A WARNING OF TENDER BOWELS, TO THE RULERS, TEACHERS, AND PEOPLE OF THIS NATION, CONCERNING THEIR CHURCH AND MINISTRY**

THAT there was a fight between the dragon and his angels, and Michael and his angels, concerning the New-Testament church and ministry, is manifest even from the letter of the Scriptures. Rev. 12.

That the dragon and his angels, though they could not get the better, as relating to the power, yet that they did get the better, as relating to the form, insomuch as that they overcame the third part of the true ministers, and drew them from their standing in the firmament of God's power, off to their earthly ministry; and that the church herself also was made to fly into the wilderness, from the face of the dragon, for her safety and preservation, where she was to be nourished and fed by God all the time of antichrist's reign; this likewise is not only revealed in the Spirit, but is also manifest from the letter. Rev. 12.

That after this flight of the true church, and overcoming of the true ministry, the dragon erected his false church and ministry (which had but at best the form without the power) over all nations, peoples, multitudes, and tongues; this is also as evident, to them that read the prophecies of the Revelations in the light of that Spirit that wrote them. Is not the false woman (after the true woman was fled) manifestly described? Rev. 17. which has a bewitching cup of fornications. ver. 2,4. Mark, she

has not the true "cup of blessing," her cup is not filled with the "wine of the kingdom," it is not the cup of the true spouse (which keeps chaste and loyal to the bed of the husband), but the cup of fornications, wherein is a form of doctrine and discipline and order and church-government, which leads from the life, which bewitches from the power, which lulls asleep in a form of profession and worship of Christ, without knowledge of, guidance by, and subjection to, his Spirit. And this is the government, ministry, and way of antichrist, wherever it is found; how curiously soever the cup be gilded, yet it is but the cup of fornication, which bewitches the heart with its golden appearance, and then leads it into adultery from the life. And the dragon does not only set up a false church over the nations (in many parts whereof the truth had before appeared), Rev. 17:15. but a false ministry also. There is a false prophet (which deceives with miracles and false appearances of truth) advanced in this corrupt state; which false prophet continues and upholds his deceit over the nations, till the mighty appearance of Christ, in Spirit and power, does judge him. Rev. 19:20. 2 Thess. 2:8. There is a beast with "horns like a lamb," who "does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men, and deceives them that dwell on the earth," etc. Rev. 8:13,14. Insomuch that he draws the kings and inhabitants of the earth (in a mystery of deceit) into the bed of whoredom and false worship, instead of the pure way of life, and pure worship of the living God, in his Spirit, and in his truth. Rev. 17:2.

Is it not further manifest, that this false church and false ministry, set up in the world by the power of the dragon, persecuted God's witnesses to the truth, in all the ages of antichrist's reign? So soon as ever the church was fled into the wilderness, the dragon forthwith went to "make war with the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments of God, and had the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 12:17. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear," Rev. 13:7,8,9. "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their forehead. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Rev. 13:15,16,17. Yes, "the woman" (the false church, which the dragon had set up, by his power in the nations, instead of the true) "was drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Rev. 17:6. Oh the misery, and lamentable hard usage of the witnesses of Jesus, who have been true lambs! born of the power, faithful to the power, witnessing against every form and appearance of religion, doctrine, and worship, which has appeared without the power, even in the days of greatest profession and highest devotion under the apostasy from the power; how have these been hunted, persecuted, devoured by the wolves in the sheep's clothing, who had got the outside, the garment, the name of Christ and Christianity, the profession of church, ministry, and ordinances, but have lacked the life, the virtue, the thing itself; and so have turned against it, and kept it down, that they might keep up their form! For let but the power appear, the form without the power is soon detected to be what it is. And this is properly antichrist and antichristianism; namely, not openly to appear in a direct denial of Christ, his truths, and worship, but to set up a way of knowledge and worship without his Spirit. Another spirit creeping into the form, that is antichrist (and the setting up observation and practice of the form out of the life and power, that is antichristianism), and this is the persecutor, destroyer, and devourer about religion.

Now though the Lord has allowed this false church and false prophet to reign long in the dragon's power, and to revile and worry his poor lambs, in every age of antichrist's reign; yet the Lord has appointed a season to judge this false church, Rev. 17:1. to cast the false prophet into the lake. Rev. 19:20. Yes, and to torment with fire and brimstone, all the false worshippers. Rev. 14:9,10,11.

Oh, how deeply does it concern England! her rulers, her teachers, yes, the whole people thereof, to consider their ways, to consider their worship, to consider their church-state, to consider their ministry, that they be not overwhelmed at unawares in the bitter wrath of the Almighty, before which there is no standing. Oh! that they could mourn, and pray, and wait for the eye of God's Spirit; for his pure light, which searches and discovers all the deceits of antichrist; that they might not be bewitched with any of the wine of the fornication of the false woman, "whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands," to entangle her lovers in, and keep them from the pure bed of life, where the Father of life, with the Son and Spirit, is enjoyed and worshipped.

If men consult concerning these things in the wisdom of the flesh, they will be entangled, and err; for that eye cannot see the mysteries of the kingdom, or the course either of truth or deceit. The gospel, the eternal truth, the true church, the true ministry, are all spiritual, (not new shadows, as the things under the ministration of the law were, but spirit and substance) and they can only be seen by the spiritual eye of the children of wisdom. The wise hunters, and diligent inquirers, into the comprehending part, cannot find the womb or the way of life, or the way of the worship of that which is begotten in the life, or God's way of ministry, which he has appointed for the feeding and preserving of the life. The prophets of old could not be known, discerned, or owned, by the fleshly eye of observation in Israel after the flesh (but they still rejected them, esteeming and magnifying the false prophets above them); how much less can the prophets and ministers of the New-Testament be seen by man's eye? Are they the prophets and ministers of Christ, which a nation cries up for such, and which the eye of the wise men therein admires, and pitches upon? Or, are those they which the renewed eye, in the light of the Lord, sees to be fitted, sanctified, and called forth by Christ into that service? Ah, poor England! must you fall into the pit before your eyes be opened!

The great controversy of this age is about church and ministry, which must carry it, the form or the power? Whether the church and ministry shall take place which was before the apostasy, or that which has sprung up in or since the apostasy? Whether man's wisdom shall determine which is the true church, and its true ministry, or whether the Spirit of God shall determine it? Whether a nation, with the ministers it sets up, shall be the church and ministry? Or whether God's holy nation, (which he calls and sanctifies by his Spirit) and the ministers which he chooses, and sends to gather and build up his in the holy faith, and pure power of life, shall be the church and ministry? Our eyes wait on the Lord to see this controversy determined, and our hope of help is in his arm; nor are we at all affrighted at the rising of any strength against us, (our hearts being given up to God's truth, and to suffer for its testimony, according to God's will, meekly and patiently in his strength) but we pity this poor land; yes, in the depth of bowels we pity the rulers, the teachers, and people therein. Oh! that they might be humbled, and in fear of the great God, surrender to him his due, before he appear in his strength to force it from them.

**OF THE KINGDOM, LAWS, AND GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST IN THE HEART  
AND CONSCIENCE, ITS INOFFENSIVENESS TO ALL JUST LAWS AND GOVERNMENTS  
OF THE KINGDOMS OF MEN**

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 discover it by: as to a piece of silver, which the woman that lost it, lighting the candle, sweeping the house, and searching it diligently, and 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: being driven from his 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 finds in the living breath, in the eternal light of life, it is able to redeem him; it is able to overspread (he becoming subject to the laws, leadings, teachings, and power of it) and leaven him 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, which Christ (who died for them) has given to redeem them by! that in that 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 which he bestows from the Father. He owns no faith, no love, no hope, no repentance, no obedience, but what springs from that, and stands in that.

Now as man is born of this, is leavened by this (as he becomes a fool in his own earthly wisdom and excellency of the fallen spirit, and becomes a babe, a child, a simple innocent, etc.), so he enters into the kingdom, being ingrafted into the root, through the virtue of this which is given him from 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 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 they which follow him, and become his disciples, go out of the world after him; that is, travel in spirit and conduct from what is of the earth, from whatever is not of the Father, but of the world. 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; to feel his living breath, by which the heart is begotten to God, out of the region of darkness; to know the movings, the stirrings, the leadings, the steps of the Lamb, who is "the Captain of our salvation;" and 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 either sits down by the way, or lies overcome by any kind of enemies, 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 of things as indeed they are! For religion is not such 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 it 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; in being born of the Spirit, in abiding in the Spirit, in living, walking, and worshipping 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, and has let the spirits of many into! Oh! that men would permit the wearing out of this earthly spirit and wisdom, that they might become like God, be formed into, and live in his image! How long shall the destroyer in every age prejudice men against them in that age which seek their good with their hearts? How long will the world stand in enmity against the generation of God's choice, and provoke the Lord to wrath against them! Surely the spirit of this world will try it out 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 be, and so cannot endure the government of his kingdom (which is not of this world) to be set up in the sight of it.

Yet the government of Christ and his kingdom is not opposite to any just government of a nation or people. Christ's government is a righteous government of the heart, or inner man, chiefly; which does not oppose a righteous government of the outward man. No, those who are Christ's subjects, and 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 others can be: for their fidelity and subjection is out of love, and for conscience' sake. But this is it which offends the world; men many times make laws in their own will, and according to their own wisdom (now the wisdom of the world is corrupt, and has erred from the guidance of God), and are not free from self-ends and interests, not being gathered into that which cleanses and keeps pure the naturals. Now that which is of God cannot bow to any thing which is corrupt in man: it can lie down and suffer, and bear the plowing of long and deep furrows upon its back; but it cannot act that which is against its life. It cannot be disloyal to its King, to gratify the spirit of this world; but what practice or testimony its King calls for against the evil and corruption of this world, it must obey singly and faithfully.



God, in every age, so brings forth and orders his innocent lambs and people, as that they are still offensive to the present age. The Lord fits them, and calls them forth to be witnesses against the evils of the present age: how can they but offend it? Can darkness choose but hate the light, which speaks against it? How can darkness in power and dominion bear to be reproved by a mean, contemptible appearance of the light, in mean and contemptible vessels? For God chooses "the weak and foolish things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to naught things that are." Look into former ages; how did God reprove the kings and princes of Israel? Not by the eminent priests and prophets, whom they expected to be taught by, but by herdsmen, by plowmen, by prophets which they despised. How did he overcome the heathenish world, yes, and the Jewish corrupted state? Was it by wise learned men (by the learned Scribes and Pharisees among the Jews, or by the wise Grecians among the heathen), or by fishermen and publicans? And how shall the recovery out of the apostasy, and the reproof of the anti-christian world be? Shall it be by wise synods and counsels of learned and orthodox men among them (as they speak), or shall it be by the learning of the Spirit, which such as these condemn? When God has the rich treasure of the knowledge of his kingdom to manifest in the world, he chooses earthen vessels, weak vessels, poor contemptible persons: he appears there (where the eye of man least looks for him) that "the excellency of the power" might appear to be of him wholly, and that the vessel might rob him of none of the glory of it. Now the Lord has not only chosen, in this day of his great appearance in Spirit to the spirits of his people, mean instruments, but mean things also, foolish things, weak things, the keeping on of a hat, the use of ordinary language, the appearing in mean habits, and despised gestures; yes, and in a foolish way of preaching (indeed it is so to that which has not the savor of the virtue and power of the life in it); and how can the wisdom of man but stumble at it? Who would think that God should require such things, or appear in such things? O living eternal power! how is your mighty presence and appearance veiled from all that look for it in any way of man's observation, or judge it with the eye of man's wisdom! *Verily you are a God that have hid yourself from the earthly spirit in its utmost wisdom; yes, in its utmost search after the knowledge of, and in the midst of, the highest profession of religion!* Which of the wise, which of the scribes in this age, can discern any of the paths, or so much as one of your footsteps? Oh that men would fear before the Lord, and be sure to govern in that which is of God, and then they 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, 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 something 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 break not forth like a fire, which none can quench; for the Lord has mighty things to bring to pass, and he has a mighty arm of power to effect them by, and what shall be able to stand before him that stands in his way?

# AN ANSWER TO THAT COMMON OBJECTION AGAINST THE QUAKERS

## THAT THEY CONDEMN ALL BUT THEMSELVES

WITH A LOVING AND FAITHFUL ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NATION, AND POWERS  
THEREOF

[1660]

### OBJECTION

*It is commonly objected against us, That we condemn all but ourselves; all the Protestant churches, martyrs, and worthies formerly (many of whom were valiant champions against Rome, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood), and all sorts of Christians and professors at present, who are not just of our stamp and way, though otherwise ever so zealous.*

### ANSWER

THE Protestant churches, (as they are called in way of distinction from the church of Rome) the blessed martyrs, who suffered for the testimony of a pure conscience towards God, and all the worthies of the Lord in their several generations, who fought against the scarlet whore, were accepted of God in their testimony against her, and are not disowned by us, but dearly owned and honored therein; and for agreeing with them in their testimony in several things, as against deriving of a ministry from Rome (which Luther wrote against, and John Huss prophesied of another ministry to arise), and against maintaining the gospel ministry by tithes, or any other way of forced maintenance, which (till Popery grew very strong and powerful) was known to have been free; and against swearing, etc. (Walter Brute said, "The perfection of Christian men is not to swear at all, because they are so commanded of Christ; whose commandment must in no case be broken, although that the city of Rome is contrary to this doctrine of Christ." Fox's Acts and Monuments, pp. 460-461. And see also p. 495, "Thorpe's Testimony both about Tithes and Swearing.") For these very things, and such like, (as for following of Christ, in not receiving or giving that honor which is out of the faith, and for testifying against the hypocrisies and corruptions of our age) do we suffer in this our day, even as they did in their day, from the same spirit that persecuted them; which, though it has much changed its form and way of appearance, yet still retains the same nature.

But all things were not discovered at once. The times were then dark, and the light small; yet they being faithful according to what was discovered, were precious in the Lord's eyes; and what through ignorance they erred in, the Lord winked at and overlooked, being pleased with that sincerity and simplicity of heart which he had stirred up in them towards himself. But if they were now alive in these

our days, and should depart from the sincerity which was then in them, and oppose the light of this age, they would not then be accepted of the Lord, but their former sincerity would be forgotten. For the light shines more and more towards the perfect day: and it is not the owning of the Light as it shone in the foregoing ages, which will now commend any man to God, but the knowing and subjecting to the Light of the present age. Even as in these our days, there was, some years ago, an honest zeal and true simplicity stirring in the Puritans (especially among the Nonconformists of them), which was of the Lord, and was very dear to him; and had the generations of this age abode there, they would have been able to have followed the Lord in every further step, and leading of his Spirit: but departing from that into some form or other, the true simplicity withered, and another thing began to live in them: and so they settled upon their lees, magnifying the form they had chose to themselves, till at length their hearts became hardened from the pure fear, even to the contracting of a spirit of profaneness; insomuch as they could mock at the next remove and discovery of the Spirit, as some new light; and so by degrees have grown persecutors of that Spirit in its outgoings in the people of the Lord, which they themselves had once some taste of, while they were reproached for Puritans. And the god of this world, who at first tempted them aside into the form, has at length prevailed so far to blind them therewith, that they can neither see what spirit they themselves are of, nor what Spirit it is they persecute.

Let therefore people consider the truth of the thing, as it is before the Lord: we do not cast dirt upon any in whom the truth of God has stirred and appeared in any measure in former ages, or in this our age; but this we testify against; namely, the setting up of any form without the life: for it is the erring spirit that still cries up the form, to keep down the power, by the form, and so by the help of it to bewitch from the Spirit wherein is the life, and not in the form. This was the painted Jezebel of the apostles' age; false teachers finely dressed up themselves with the form of godliness, and then under this cover they could deny the power, and make head against it. 2 Tim. 3:5. How easy is it for them to appear in the form of the doctrines of the gospel, in the form of zeal, in the form of holiness, to pass in a nation for the true church; and then to asperse them for heretics, who, appearing in the power, cannot but deny that form which is without the power. This is the great witch of this age (even that spirit of zeal and devotion which is best clothed and decked with the form without the power), which though men (who judge of the things of God after the flesh) justify, admire, and much contend for in her several shapes and dresses (some being for one, some for another), yet the Lord is searching after her, and will find her out with his eternal flames, which will make her manifest, and all her lovers shall dread her burning and bed of torment. Now, as all along the apostasy, this bewitching spirit (this spirit which bewitches from the power), has crept up under a form of church worship and holiness; so the other Spirit (the pure Spirit of life, the Spirit of true zeal and fear of the Lord), has still appeared more and more out of the forms. Who were the best preachers, and most eminent Christians in the Puritan days? Were they not those who least minded the form then; no, indeed, who were most against the form, and persecuted for their conscientious stumbling at it? And who were the greatest persecutors then, but they who were most zealous for the form, both of the government and worship of the church of England? And where is the persecuting spirit next to be looked for, but in the forms which should next appear? And where likewise is the appearance of the true Spirit next to be looked for, but in those whom the Lord should raise up to testify against those forms, and to be the succeeding sufferers for their testimony, as the Puritans had been foregoing sufferers for their testimony.

Yet if there be any persons left, among any of the forms which have appeared (whether former or latter), that have not lost their sincerity and true zeal towards God, them we own and have unity with,

so far as they keep, or rather are kept, thereto. If there be any among the Episcopal sort that in truth of heart desire to fear the Lord, and look upon the Common-Prayer-Book as an acceptable way of worshipping him, we pity their blindness, yet are tender towards them, and would not have the simplicity persecuted in them because of this, but rather cherished. If there be any among the Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Seekers, or any other sort, that in truth of heart wait upon the Lord in those ways, and do not find a deadness overgrown them, but a pure fresh lively zeal towards God, with an unfeigned love to his people, our hearts are one with this; and we cannot fight against this good thing in any of them, though in love to them we testify, that their form and way of worship is their present loss and hindrance; yet we doubt not but that the Lord (in his time) will make manifest to such the light of this age; which is the very thing the people of God, in many foregoing ages, have been praying for. But this is our lamentation, that forms and ways of worship abound; but the Puritan principle, the Puritan spirit, is lost and drowned in them all; and that men are hardened against our testimony, not from the remainders of the simplicity in them, but because they are erred from the simplicity, and fallen in league with another spirit, which has lain lurking in forms of knowledge and worship (to tempt aside from the simplicity, and to hide the sight of the life and power from the panting soul) all this night of the apostasy.

Now mark how easy and natural it is to that spirit to enter into a form, to cry up a form, to set up a form in a nation, city, or country; doubtless it had been done in this nation long ago, had not the mighty hand of the Lord withstood it. When the evil and unclean spirit is detected and driven out of one form, if it does not get another suddenly to appear in, and tempt with, it must needs loose many of its subjects. The strumpet, or false church, is forced (as God discovers her nakedness and lewdness) to change her dresses and appearances, to new trick and adorn her bed: and then, as if she also were changed, and were now no longer the same, she comes forth again with boldness, and tempts the young man again to come in unto her. Prov. 7:16. And thus "she casts down many wounded; yes, many strong men have been slain by her." ver. 26. Who otherwise would have "pondered the path of life," chap. 5:6. had they not been ensnared by her flatteries, who "forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God." chap. 2:17. There is no more certain and ready way to suppress truth, and to betray the honesty which is singly searching after it, than to present a form of godliness or worship, as the proper way of meeting with it: for hereby the soul is lulled asleep with a false hope, until the freshness of its desire begins to die, and its life to wither; and then the fleshly part easily grows into unity with, and zeal for, that form which indeed is of the flesh; though it appeared and tempted as if it had been otherwise. And how many have gone a great way towards hell, and have been deeply entangled and distressed in the chambers of death, by entering into this strumpet's church or house, which they then (through the subtlety of her deceit) took for the house or church of God! Prov. 7:27. Consider the thing a little seriously. When the evil spirit is driven out of his strong-hold of gross Popery, where should he run but into Episcopacy? When he is driven out of Episcopacy, where should he run but into Presbytery? When he is driven out of Presbytery, where should he run but into Independency? When he is driven out of Independency, where should he run but into Anabaptism? When he is driven out of Anabaptism, where should he run but into a Way of Seeking? And what is his end of running into Episcopacy, but to save alive that spirit which was hunted out of Popery, and could abide no longer there, and so the better (and the safer from being discerned) to reproach and persecute the other Spirit (wherever it appeared) under the nick-names of Puritans, Separatists, Brownists, Round-heads, etc. And what is his end afterwards of running into Presbytery, but to save that alive which was hunted out of Episcopacy, and to persecute the former truly zealous Spirit (where

it should further appear afterwards) by means of that form? Thus the forms and appearances of things change; but the fight is still the same, the evil spirit still getting uppermost, under a form of godliness, and from there shooting forth its arrows at those that seek after purity of heart, and cannot but testify against those forms where the impure one lodges.

This then is the sum of our answer in this respect; we are not against the true life and power of godliness, wherever it has appeared, or yet appears under the veil of any form whatsoever. No, all persons who singly wait upon the Lord in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts, whether under any form, or out of forms, (that matters little to us) are very dear unto us in the Lord. But we are against all forms, images, imitations, and appearances, which betray the simplicity and sincerity of the heart, keep the life in bondage, and endanger the loss of the soul. And too many such now there are, which hold the immortal seed of life in captivity under death, over which we cannot but mourn, and wait for its breaking off the chains, and its rising out of all its graves into its own pure life, power, and fulness of liberty in the Lord.

### **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NATION, AND POWERS THEREOF**

O KING! O parliament! O nation of England! consider before the decree come forth; before the ruin of the nation (with the powers thereof) be irrevocably sealed: for the Lord has a controversy with this nation, and he will plead with you, O England! who desires not, and cannot bear a government in righteousness, for the suppressing of the evil, and encouragement of the good; but the good is still suppressed in you, and cannot grow as it ought, because of the lust of the nation against the purity of the life of God, and because of the corrupt wills, ends, and interests of those who still are in power.

After King Henry the VIIIth had renounced and shaken off in part the Pope's authority in this nation, he did not let it fall to the ground as an evil thing, but took upon himself the exercise of it, assuming to himself the headship and government under Christ in all ecclesiastical causes and matters in his dominions. The same course his successors followed, keeping the very title which the Pope gave to him of Defender of the Faith. And so parliaments in their days (as if the government of the church were a right and privilege of the nation, and not peculiar to Christ) have taken upon them to make laws and orders about the government of the church and people of God in spiritual things, as well as about matters of state.

Now it would fairly and honestly (with the spirit of meekness, and in the fear of the Lord) be inquired into, *Whether the Pope's power and authority in this nation was a true church-power and authority.* That is, whether it was such a church-power and authority as Christ had instituted; or of another nature, even of a nature contrary to Christ, and to his inward government in the spirits of his people. For if the Pope's power and authority was a true church-power and authority, then it may be lawful in another hand, though not in the Pope's; but if it was a usurped kind of authority and government in itself, then it cannot be lawful in itself, nor serviceable to Christ in any other hand; but will prove an instrument of war against him, in whose hands soever it be put. And let it be singly considered, whether the church power in this nation has not been a curb to the rising of the purity of religion, even a sharp check upon the tender conscience; but such as the loose (yes, profane spirit) would take pleasure in and contend for.

The true church-power is only the power of the Spirit of Christ. That converts men to God, and that alone is able to govern them in the affairs of his kingdom, being converted. Man, meddling with religion and church-government in his wisdom, is but a beast, and must govern like a beast; namely, with force and cruelty over the spirit and conscience which is tender towards God. As the Lord God of heaven and earth never gave the converting power to any, so neither did he ever give this governing power to any, further than as they were endued with the Spirit; for that is the scepter of his church and kingdom, which is a scepter of righteousness, which leads on in the love and gentleness of the Spirit that which is to be dealt gently with, and spiritually cuts off, by its severity and sharpness, that which is to be cut off. And here are Christ's limits of government, which that spirit and wisdom which exceeds, errs, and does hurt both to itself and others.

Now if, in the mist of darkness, which has long overspread the earth (for though there broke out a little light to discover the thick blackness of Popery, and to cause some reformation out of it, yet the mist was not expelled), this nation has erred, her princes, her teachers, her parliaments, and all sorts of persons, in laying hold on and establishing a wrong church-power, which power has had a bad effect; namely, in suppressing the progress of the reforming spirit, and raising up a formal spirit, if not a spirit of looseness and profaneness, which ran backwards towards Popery, and not forwards from it: yet let them not love error, and so strive against the light which shines forth to discover the error to them; but let them humble themselves before Christ, the Lord of all, and restore unto him that which is his due, lest they provoke him to wrath, and cause him to take from them what they look upon as their due. For is it not just with Christ to take that power from men, which they (so long as they have it) will not forbear managing and making use of to keep him from his power? Consider these things, O England! for they belong to your peace, and toward the mitigation of your sorrow and misery in the day of your calamity.

This is from one who has mourned over you, while you have been rejoicing.

ISAAC PENINGTON the Younger.

Oh that you could know, at least in this last hour of your day, how to make your peace with the Lord, and not begin that controversy afresh with him, which he has already so much shattered and broken you about, that the dregs of the cup, whereof you have already so largely drunk, might pass from you!

### **AN EXPLANATORY POSTSCRIPT**

WE read of the getting up of another power than Christ's in the church, after the days of the apostles. 1 Thess. 2:4. Rev. 13:2. which power was to last forty-two months, even all the time of antichrist's reign; by which power the beast should make war with and overcome the saints in all kindreds, tongues, and nations. ver. 5,6,7. And all this wickedness and persecutions of the saints should be committed under a pretense of righteousness, as if it were for Christ, and the well-government of his church, from a true and rightly-derived and well-balanced power. 1 Thess. 2:8,9. Now this power will last in one form or other, even till the very coming of Christ: and then shall that wicked spirit (in all his workings, in all his various appearances and transformings, as if he still were for God, and for the right and orderly government of his church and temple) be discovered, by degrees consumed, and at last destroyed. ver. 8. And then the kings or powers of the earth, which gave their power and strength to the beast (helping

him to cause men to worship. Rev. 13:15,16), making war with the Lamb and his suffering saints by their laws, whips, prisons, fines, etc., shall be overcome by him, who fights against them with "the Spirit of his mouth," and by his "truth, meekness, and righteousness," which shines in the hearts and lives of his "called, faithful, and chosen." Rev. 17:13,14. Psa. 45:4,5.

The power of Christ cannot hurt any of his lambs (it never forced the weak ones, the tender-conscienced, but he carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. Isa. 40:11.). He had rather have many hypocrites spared, than one ear of wheat plucked up. Mat. 13:29. That power therefore in the church which spares the hypocrites (who can easily comply with an outward conformity in worship, without feeling an inward life or virtue), but lights heavy on that which is tender and shy in matters of worship (knowing that it must give an account thereof to Christ), that is not the true church-power, but at best but a counterfeit of the true.

## **THE GREAT QUESTION CONCERNING THE *LAWFULNESS OR UNLAWFULNESS***

### **OF SWEARING UNDER THE GOSPEL**

**STATED AND CONSIDERED OF**

**FOR**

**THE SATISFACTION OF SUCH AS DESIRE TO SCAN THE THING IN THE WEIGHT  
OF GOD'S SPIRIT**

**AND**

**TO SEE THE TRUE AND CLEAR DETERMINATION OF IT IN HIS UNERRING LIGHT**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**[1661]**

**THE GREAT QUESTION, etc.**

WHETHER it be lawful for Christians (who know Christ, the substance of all the shadows under the law, and are in the new covenant) to swear upon weighty occasions, as it was lawful for the Jews to do

under the old covenant. Or, Whether Christ allows his disciples to swear in solemn cases, as Moses did allow his disciples.

Answer. For the clearing of this weighty controversy, to all such as singly desire to know the truth (as it is in Jesus) in this particular, that their hearts may bow to him therein, and not be overtaken with the reasonings and subtleties of the carnal mind (which never knew nor can know the power, but has always been, and still is, setting up dead images of God's truths and of his worship, out of the power), these few things following would be considered of. First, What an oath is. Or, The nature of a right and true oath under the law. Secondly, The ground or occasion of its institution. Thirdly, The cases wherein an oath was to be used. Fourthly, The proper end and service of an oath. Fifthly, The suitableness of its nature to its end and service. Lastly, The persons to whom the use of an oath was proper in itself, and intended and allowed by God; and whether there be any persons to whom it is not proper, and to whom the Lord does not allow it. This last is the main, and will of itself determine the thing; but yet a brief consideration of the former may not be unprofitable, to make way for a clearer leading and insight into it.

First, As touching *an oath, what it is, or the nature of it*. A true and lawful oath under the law was an engagement or bond upon the soul, Num. 30:2 by the name of the Lord, Deut. 10:20. to the speaking of truth in things *affirmed*, and to the performance of truth in things promised. It was as a seal to bind fallen man (man fallen from the truth, from the uprightness) to truth in his *words* and *promises*, either to God or man. This is the nature and use of *an oath*; namely, to bind the soul to truth, to be such an engagement upon the soul, as, if there be any fear of God there, it cannot but dread to break, knowing, that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that takes his name in vain."

Secondly, *The ground or occasion of an oath*, is the fall of man from truth, from innocency, from the uprightness which engaged him to truth before his fall. This made the Jews stand in need of this bond under the law, in their purposes and promises towards God; and the same thing likewise made them stand in need of it one from another, to ratify and confirm truth between them.

Thirdly, *The cases wherein an oath was to be used*, which were chiefly these four.

1. In case of a promise or vow to God. 2. In case of promise to man. That the truth, integrity, and plain intention of the heart might stand, and there might be no departing therefrom, in the thing promised, either to God or man; an oath in that state was found useful to bind the soul thereto.
3. In case of pronouncing or declaring the truth of a thing which was weighty, that there might be a clear and satisfactory ground of belief.
4. In case of controversy between parties, where the controversy could not be determined, but by taking the confession of the one party for truth; there that party was to seal his confession with an oath, and so the other to rest satisfied therewith, and the controversy thereupon end.

Fourthly, *The end of an oath*, which is for final confirmation, and avoiding all further strife and contention about the thing sworn to. By binding the thing (promised or affirmed) with an oath, the thing is confirmed; and now there is no more strife in the heart concerning the thing, if relating to



God, or between man and man in things relating to them; but the striving nature is bound down by the oath of God, wherewith the thing is ratified, and so the doubt and uncertainty removed, and the contest ended. Thus of right it ought to be, and is, where the oath is forcible and in its proper service.

Fifthly, *The suitableness of its nature to the end aimed at by it.* Man out of the Christian life, can go no further than to engage himself by the fear and dread of that God, whom he professes to worship and serve, and who cannot but be jealous of his name and honor, and ready to vindicate the taking of it in vain. Man under the law could not bind himself to God, in any promise or service more than this; nor can there be any greater bond or seal of truth given by one man to another, in the fallen state, than this. And he that will venture to break this, what but deceit and treachery can be expected from him? insomuch as no other engagement from him can be of weight, he hereby manifesting the absence of that in his mind and spirit, whereupon all ties are to fasten.

Sixthly, *The persons to whom the use of an oath was proper and lawful, and for whom it was instituted; and whether there be any persons to whom it is not proper and lawful, and for whose use it was not instituted.*

To find out this distinctly and truly, we must consider the several conditions of man since the creation; and observe to which of those it is useful and proper in itself, and allowed by God, and to which it is not useful in itself, nor allowed by God.

There have been four estates or conditions of mankind since the creation:

1. *An estate of innocency*; an estate of integrity, of purity, of righteousness, wherein man could not lie or deceive; but his promises to God, and his words to men, must needs be *Yes*, and *Amen*: for it was impossible to man, who was made in God's image (which is truth) to lie or deceive, until the deceit entered him, and drew him out of the truth.
2. There was (and still is) *an estate of deep captivity*, wherein this truth and innocency was wholly lost; and man wholly corrupted in his spirit and nature, and wholly degenerated from God. This was the estate of the heathen, who knew not God generally, nor desired after him, but walked in the vanity of their minds, and were given up to their own hearts' lusts. Yet among some of these the eternal principle of life was stirring, which did check them, and offer to guide them out of this estate; which they that hearkened unto did not remain in the fall with the rest, but felt the power of that, which reproved and checked them, circumcising their hearts; and, in their obedience thereto, justifying them in their consciences before God.
3. There was *an estate of shadowy redemption*, which was not the true estate of redemption itself, or they the true people which were to be redeemed; but a shadow of the redemption, a shadow of the redeemed people, a shadow of the way and path of life; wherein were figures of the heavenly substance, the heavenly people, the heavenly things, the heavenly inheritance, the heavenly food, etc. But all these figures, in and under the law, were not the true heavenly and invisible things themselves, but outward and visible signs and representations of them.
4. There was, and blessed be the Lord, now at length (after the great, long, and dark night of apostasy)

again is brought forth, *an estate of true redemption*; wherein the soul is brought back from the death, from the captivity, from the fall, from the deceit, and from the shadows, into the truth, into the pure life, into the innocency, into the uprightness; wherein Christ (the power of God) is witnessed, and the soul new formed in his pure image, and become a new creature, having a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, a new nature, a new life and spirit, (in the newness of which life it is to live and walk) a new course and manner of life, a new place to walk and have its citizenship in, even in that very heaven from which it looks for the Savior; wherein also all old things, which came in by the fall, and all the old shadows of the law, are to pass away, and in this state all things are to become new. And this is not only to be expected in the perfection of this state, but belongs (in its measure and degree) to the very beginning of it: for even so soon as a man is ingrafted into Christ, even then he is a new creature, and all things then begin to become new unto him, and he is then to begin departing from all old things, both of the natural or heathenish state, and of the Jewish state, until he has left them all behind. The apostle says expressly, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, all things are become new." Christ, the Lord and Master of all believers, who himself was not in the world, calls all his disciples and followers out of the world. How, out of the world? Does he call them from having any being or commerce in the earth, or in the world? No, not so; but to come out of the *evil and corrupt state, practices, and ways* of the world; out of the *earthly ways* of the Heathens, out of the *earthly ordinances and observations* of the Jews; yes, even out of every thing in both, which was not of the Father, but of the world; and this made them a gazing-stock to both, and the scorn and hatred of both, wherever they came.

These are the four estates or conditions of mankind since the creation; in one of which, all men that ever were, have been to be found; and according to the estate and condition wherein man is found, is the law of God to him, and his requirings of him.

Now let any man, in the fear of the Lord God, weigh and consider, to which sort or sorts of these an oath was useful in itself, and allowed by God, and to which not. Was it useful in the innocent state? or did God appoint it there, when man could not but speak truth? Or is it useful in the redeemed estate, where a greater bond is received, and professedly held forth, than the innocency of man's nature was? Is not Christ the truth, the substance? Is not he that is in him, the new creature? Were not all the oaths, and shadows of the law, to last till Christ the sub-stance came? Is not this the bond of the gospel? And does not this seal truth, and keep to truth more firmly than the oath under the law could? and the greater bond being come does not the lesser bond, which signified it, flee away and vanish, and the use of it now become both needless and unlawful? Men may reason subtly, and persuade strongly against the truth; but we know certainly and infallibly, in the light of the Lord, that the use of an oath was not for man in innocency, nor for man under the power and virtue of the redemption by Christ (which brings man back into the truth, into the innocency, and into that life and strength which preserves in the truth and innocency), but for fallen man, for man erred from the truth and covenant of God: and it is very manifest to us, that for a disciple of Christ, who has received the law from his lips against swearing, to be brought back again to swearing (the bond of man in the fallen state, and under the law) is no less than a denial of Christ, who is his life and redeemer out of the fallen state, and who also is the substance, which ends the oaths; and he that has ever known the pure power of his life, and received the pure law thereof in the clear openings of his spirit, must not depart from there, from the feeling of that, into the fleshly reasonings, into consultations with the fleshly-wise part, which will be sure to give such interpretations of scriptures as may avoid the cross; but keep to that power which

begat him, and to that principle wherein he was begotten; and there he shall never be able to get beyond the *yes* and *amen* in Christ, beyond the confessing of the truth in the presence and life of it, which is the end and substance of swearing under the law; and therefore the Apostle Paul, who several times, and in several cases, refers to the prophecies of the prophets, who foretold of things under the gospel in law-phrases, renders the word confess, instead of swear, as may appear by comparing Rom. 14:11. and Philip. 2:11. with Isa. 45:23. That which the law called swearing, the gospel calls confessing, each of them speaking of the same thing, in the proper dialect of each; which confessing in the life, in the truth, in the renewed principle, is the weight and substance of that, whereof the oath was but a shadow. For what is the substance and intent of an oath? Is not the intent of it to bind to the speaking or performing of truth? And what is it that binds? Is it the shadow or the substance? Is it the words of an oath, or the sense and weight of the thing upon the spirit? It was not the *form* of an oath, but the *weight* and *substance* hid underneath, which bound the Jew under the law; and if there be no more weight and substance in the *yes* and *no* of a disciple under the gospel, it must needs be more binding to them, and has also more true ground of satisfaction in it (to other Christians at least) than a Jew's or Heathen's swearing; yes, and if the men of the world would but freely speak their hearts, it would be acknowledged to be of more weight with them also. Who of those who have observed and known our manner of living, and upright speaking and behavior for these many years, both towards the various rulers and authorities of the nation, and also towards all men of all sorts, would not prefer our *yes* and *no* before the oaths of others?

*Objection. But though a Christian may not swear in relation to himself; yet why may he not swear in relation to the satisfaction of others, seeing God himself swore in that respect, who was as much in the power and virtue of that life which binds from swearing as a Christian can be?*

Answer 1. God (being not bound himself by the laws wherewith he binds the creature) may either himself, or by an instrument (in his immediate life and power), do that which the creature has not liberty from him to do; but that is no warrant in general, but the disciple is particularly to eye the rule from his Master, CHRIST JESUS (who is Lord over the household of faith, and who was as faithful in all his house as a Lord, as Moses, the servant, was in his house), by whom the same God, who once allowed oaths to the Jews, has now wholly forbidden swearing. And let the disciple diligently and faithfully eye the laws of the new covenant (which are written by, and received from, the ingrafted word of faith in the heart) he shall find oaths excluded there, as a part of the old covenant, even as a literal and shadowy confirmation of truth among the Jews under Moses' dispensation for the time of the law; but the grace and truth itself is the substance, and the faith received is the seal of truth under the gospel, both towards God and man.

Answer 2. A Christian may not swear in relation to the satisfaction of others, because he is to hold forth his light, his life, his principle, in the eye of the world; he is to testify to the worth and excellency of it, that it is a greater and firmer bond to him, both towards God and man, than any oaths either of the Heathen or of the Jews can be. Now his entering into their way of confirmation of things, which is short of his own, is an undervaluing and disparagement of the worth and weight of that principle of truth which God has given him, and raised up in him: it is indeed a denying of it: for entering into the law-bond, is laying of the gospel-bond by; and an offering of that as a bond, which indeed once was so, but is now excluded by the law of faith from being a bond any longer, and has lost its virtue. And if men would but open their eyes, they might easily see how little oaths bind, and how unprofitable they

are to the end and use for which they are intended: but the *yes*, and *amen* in Christ (the principle of life) cannot be broken; but he that abides in him must perform the *yes* and *amen*, which is firm in him.

Answer 3. A Christian or disciple may not swear under the gospel, because Christ has brought in confession of the truth, from the principle of his life, instead of oaths; which is made good not only by the Apostle Paul's rendering of *swearing* in the law-time, *confessing*, in the fulfilling of it under the gospel; but also by Christ's bringing in the *yes, yes*, and *no, no*, instead of the law's swearing. In the Jew, the oath was the seal or confirmation under the law; in the disciple, who is in the life, and has learned the truth of Christ, the life, the *yes, yes*, the *no, no*, is appointed him by Christ instead of the oath. And though the subtlety and fleshly wisdom strive hard to wrest that place out of the hands of the simplicity, yet they shall never be able to do it: but he that looks on it with a single eye in the light of that Spirit wherein it was wrote, shall plainly see Christ's drift to be to take away the shadow, even to abolish that use of swearing, which was proper and allowed to the Jews under the law, and to bring the confession or denial of the thing, the *yes, yes*, and *no, no*, (from the gospel spirit and principle in the disciple) in the stead of it; which to make more manifest to the honest, simple, and naked heart, which is willing to take up the will and truth of God in every thing, with all the crosses that attend it, let these few things following be uprightly considered of.

First, That slight, trivial, and frequent oaths were not allowed under the law, but forbidden by the law, as the taking God's holy and dreadful name in vain.

Secondly, That though vain oaths were then forbidden, yet solemn oaths, weighty oaths, such as were needful and useful to the thing intended, were allowed under the law. So in all those cases before expressed, oaths were allowed and justifiable, so that they were but careful to perform them, and did not forswear themselves.

Thirdly, Christ brings in an exception against the use of this lawful swearing under the law, as the word *but* does plainly signify, and forbids swearing wholly, altogether, or at all. The law says, "You shall not forswear yourself;" that is the substance of what the law forbids: it allows swearing but forbids forswearing, but I say unto you, you shall not only avoid forswearing, but swearing also, and that wholly, or altogether: "but I say unto you, swear not at all."

Fourthly, Christ brings in another thing instead of swearing, a thing far more suitable to the truth, plainness, and simplicity of the gospel, which is confessing the thing, or speaking the thing in truth, just as it is, either by way of affirmation or denial; "but let your yes be yes, and no no."

And there is liberty enough left to a disciple to satisfy any man concerning the truth of a thing by confession, as much as by an oath: for is it not full as weighty under the gospel to confess the presence of God, or that he is witness, or that we speak the thing in his fear, and in the feeling of his life and power, as it were under the law to swear *by his life, by his fear, by his power*, or the like? Is not the confessing of God by a Christian of more weight than the swearing by him from a Jew or Heathen? O nations and powers of the earth! seek truth, seek righteousness, and do not set up a form or image of things in your own wills, and according to your own wisdom and inventions, above the power of God.

And let it be duly considered, whether the powers of this nation deal kindly with the Lord, in exacting

an oath from his people, who (not in the least disaffection to them, but only in fidelity of conscience to Christ, their Lord and master) cannot but refuse it.

The question is concerning their fidelity and obedience to the king; that is the thing which an oath is required to ratify and confirm. Now the swearing itself, or formal taking of an oath, is of little value; but to be obedient, to be faithful, is the thing of value. The case then stands thus: the Lord has so formed them, that they cannot but be faithful and obedient. The Lord has raised up that principle in them, which cannot hurt the king, or any man, nor cannot stand by and see him or any man hurt, without endeavoring to prevent it. Here is their strength of performing good, and avoiding evil; and their *yes* and *no*, from this principle, is the best security which they can possibly give to any man (and he who has thus formed them in the *pure principle* of his life, has likewise forbidden them to swear). But this cannot be accepted for lack of the other confirmation; namely, of *swearing*, which came in by the fall, and was allowed among the shadows of the law, but is forbidden by the gospel.

Now O king! shall not God's people be faithful and obedient to the Lord, as well as to you? Shall they not be true to the principle of life, wherein they are begotten and brought forth in the love and good-will to all, and out of enmity to any? Has God raised up in them a principle which cannot deceive; and will not the *yes* and *no* of that serve (after so much experience, through so many changes), but they must either break Christ's command, and hazard their souls, or else lose their liberties and estates?

Oh! that men would wait on the Lord, for his pure fear to be written on their hearts by the finger of his Spirit, that they might come out of the fleshly wisdom into the womb of the eternal wisdom, from which our principle came; that they might be able to see and justify the purity, righteousness, nobility, and worth of it; and that they might feel its security from all that is out of the good-will, out of the love, out of the life, and out of the peace; that so there might be an end of all strife, rebellion, heart-burnings, plots, and all manner of wickedness and ungodliness, which have no place in it, but daily waste and wither where it is sown and grows, even till they come to an end; and till the righteousness and pure innocency fill the room and place which they had, both in the heart and mind within, and in the life and conduct outwardly.

And let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity, and look well to his goings: for the darkness of the thick night of apostasy is already past, and the true light now again shines. Blessed is the eye which sees it, and the heart which is established in it, in the midst of those terrible and dreadful shakings and confusions, which must not end here, but go over all nations. Oh that this nation could once bow to it, that it might be happy, and its rents and breaches be healed forever!

**SOMETHING SPOKEN TO A WEIGHTY QUESTION  
CONCERNING THE  
MAGISTRATE'S PROTECTION OF THE INNOCENT**

**WHEREIN IS HELD FORTH**

**THE BLESSING AND PEACE WHICH NATIONS OUGHT TO WAIT FOR AND EMBRACE  
IN THE LATTER DAYS**

**WITH**

**SOME CONSIDERATIONS**

**For the Serious and Wise in Heart throughout this Nation to ponder, for diverting God's  
Wrath, if possible, from breaking forth upon it**

**Also**

**A brief Account of what the People called QUAKERS desire in reference to the Civil  
Government**

**With a few Words to such as by the everlasting Arm of God's Power have been drawn  
and gathered out of the Apostasy, into the living Truth and Worship**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the  
fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow,  
and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.  
Hos. 2:18**

**[1661]**

**SOMETHING SPOKEN TO A**

**Weighty Question, etc.**

**QUESTION.**

Whether the magistrate, in righteousness and equity, is engaged to defend such, who, by the

peaceableness and love which God has wrought in their spirits, and by that law of life, mercy, good-will, and forgiveness, which God, by his own finger, has written in their hearts, are taken off from fighting, and cannot use a weapon, destructive to any creature, to defend him.

### **ANSWER.**

MAGISTRACY was intended by God for the defense of the people; not only of those who have ability, and can fight for them, but of such also who cannot, or are forbidden by the love and law of God written in their hearts so to do. Thus women, children, sick persons, aged persons, and also priests in nations (who have ability to fight, but are exempted by their function, which is not equivalent to the exemption which God makes by the law of his Spirit in the heart) have the benefit of the law, and of the magistrate's protection, without fighting for the defense of either: and is it not most righteous and equal, that fighting, which came in by the fall, should come to an end in such whom God draws out of the fall; and that magistrates (who have power given them to rule by God, and ought to rule under him) should not require fighting of them whom the Lord of lords has redeemed out of the fighting nature, and chosen to be as examples of meekness and peaceableness in the places where they live? How can he fight with creatures, in whom is love and good-will towards those creatures, and whose bowels are rolling over them, because of their wanderings in the lusts, in the strife, and in the wars? Fighting is not suitable to a gospel Spirit; but to the spirit of the world, and the children thereof. The fighting in the gospel is turned inward against the lusts, and not outward against the creatures. There is to be a time, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." When the power of the gospel spreads over the whole earth, thus shall it be throughout the earth; and where the power of the Spirit takes hold of and overcomes any heart at present, thus will it be at present with that heart. This blessed state, which shall be brought forth in the general in God's season, must begin in particulars; and they therein are not prejudicial to the world, nor would be so looked upon, if the right eye in man were but open to see with, but emblems of that blessed state which the God of glory has promised to set up in the world in the days of the gospel. And though by this means there may seem to be a weakening of the strength of the magistrate, and of the defense of that nation wherein God causes the virtue and power of his truth to spread in the hearts of his people; yet in truth it is not so, but a great strengthening. For if righteousness be the strength of a nation, and the seed of God the support of the earth, then where righteousness is brought forth, and where the seed of God springs up and flourishes, that nation grows strong; and instead of the arms and strength of man, the eternal strength overspreads that nation, and that wisdom springs up in the spirits of men, which is better than weapons of war; and the wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable, and teaches to make peace, and to remove the cause of contention and wars, and unites the heart to the Lord, in waiting upon him for counsel, strength, and preservation in this state, who brought into it. Now is not this much better and safer than the present estate of things in the world; first, to have the cause of wars removed, and a sweet, peaceable, righteous Spirit in the stead thereof; secondly, to have a peaceable and righteous generation, whom the Lord has made and preserved so, breathing to the Lord for peace, good, and prosperity to the nation, and magistrates thereof, and to stretch forth his arm to be a defense about them; thirdly, to have the God of heaven engaged by his power to defend that power and magistracy which defends righteousness in general, and particularly his people in their obedience unto him, whom it is most righteous for them to obey, and for the magistrate, who claims his rule and dominion under God, to protect them in? Were not this much better both for magistrates and people than the present estate? Oh that that were awakened in man which can rightly discern and

judge!

Objection. But this is a Utopian state, or a world in the moon. Is it possible that ever there should be such a state here on earth?

Answer 1. When the principle of God, which lies hid in the hearts of men, over which the corrupt nature has grown, and upon which the spirit of darkness in men tramples, shall be raised and come into dominion; righteousness, peace, and good-will shall spring up as naturally among men, as wars, strifes, divisions, emulations, heart-burnings, etc. now do.

2. There is a promise of such a state, "when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and lie down with the lamb; when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and nothing shall hurt or destroy upon God's holy mountain;" but the nations, who have been full of war, shall throw away their weapons, become subject to the spirit of peace and righteousness, and learn war no more; when the wisdom of the wise, and strength of the strong, shall be broken in pieces; and the little child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the cockatrice's den, and lead all. As certainly as the Lord God is true, so this must be in the Lord's season: and will it not be happy when it comes to pass? Who would hinder it? Who would strive to keep the old heavens and the old earth standing, which must be dissolved before the new heavens and the new earth (wherein dwells righteousness) can be formed and brought forth?

3. This state was in a fair forwardness once, before the universal apostasy from that truth and power which God had sown in the earth, upon the breathing of and sending forth his Spirit among his disciples, according to his promise. Precious was that seed, great the growth of it, the woman, or true church, full of beauty and glory, and brought forth the man-child, which was to rule all nations; but it has pleased the Lord to adjourn that day till after the night of apostasy, catching up the man-child to heaven, and causing the woman to fly into the wilderness, where she has been hid ever since from all but the inward eye of the inward Israel: and the world, in the heathenish nature, has been crying up holy church, holy church! to her who has set upon the beast, and been drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; but the tender spouse, the Lamb's wife, the mother of all the lambs, has been banished from the earth, and a cruel, bloody step-mother set over all the tender-conscienced ever since. Oh woful, woful has been the state of the true church, and of all the children of truth, all this dark night of the apostasy! but the Lord is putting an end to it: and though this false woman seems to be recovering ground, and setting her feet over the necks of the lambs again, and begins to think she shall prevail, and sit as a lady and queen over the consciences of God's heritage forever; yet she shall find that strong is the Lord God who has begun to judge her; and into the sea which she raises shall she sink like a stone, and her fall shall be great and speedy: for even in one day shall her misery overtake and devour her.

4. After this long night of apostasy the Lord has begun to make some preparations towards this state again. He has opened his treasuries; he has let forth the power of his truth; he has poured down of his Spirit to sanctify and gather a people unto himself; he has opened the principle of life in the hearts of many, and in a great measure drawn them into it; who, so far as they are renewed thereby, and found there, are made peaceable, pure, meek, gentle, innocent, upright-hearted, and tender-conscienced, both towards God and man. And though multitudes of reproaches have been cast upon them, yet the



Lord has been pleased to cause their innocency and integrity to shine, to the wiping of them off in a great degree, and will, in due time, bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day. And what remains toward the carrying on of this work, but the Lord's prospering of this principle, and blowing upon the other? As the Lord does this, so will it go on; and the nations, kings, princes, great ones, as this principle is raised in them, and the contrary wisdom, the earthly policy, which undoes all, brought down, so will they feel the blessing of God in themselves, and become a blessing to others. Oh that there were an ear to hear! for this is the only way of healing this nation (which has been so grievously torn), as will be acknowledged when woful experience makes it manifest. But man in prosperity cannot hear, and that enforces from the Lord, by the turning of his hand, the bringing upon him the day of his adversity; which, could he have hearkened to in the day of his prosperity, might have been escaped: for God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; he is necessitated to it for his own glory's sake, the preservation and defense of his truth and people, and for the carrying on of his work.

Objection. But if all men were of this mind, and none would fight, suppose a nation should be invaded, would not the land of necessity be ruined?

Answer 1. Whenever such a thing shall be brought forth in the world, it must have a beginning before it can grow and be perfected. And where should it begin but in some particulars in a nation, and so spread by degrees, until it has overspread the nation, and then from nation to nation, until the whole earth be leavened? Therefore whoever desires to see this lovely state brought forth in the general, if he would further his own desire, must cherish it in the particular. And oh! that men would not spend their strength, and hazard the loss of all in cherishing pretenses and names of Christianity, but would pray to the Lord at length to open that eye in them which can see the loveliness of the truth, power, and virtue of Christianity; that they might cherish that tenderness of conscience wherein the truth grows and springs up in its virtue and power. And then perhaps they would soon acknowledge the happiness of the world to depend upon the growth of that principle, and of that people, who are now despised by the world, and cannot but be so by the spirit and wisdom of the world, which lies in wickedness, they being drawn out of, and testifying against, it.

2. It is not for a nation, coming into the gospel life and principle, to take care before-hand how they shall be preserved; but the gospel will teach a nation (if they hearken to it) as well as a particular person, to trust the Lord, and to wait on him for preservation. Israel of old stood not by their strength and wisdom, and preparations against their enemies; but in quietness and confidence, and waiting on the Lord for direction, Isa. 30:15. and shall not such now, who are true Israelites, and have indeed attained to the true gospel state, follow the Lord in the peaceable life and Spirit of the gospel, unless they see by rational demonstration before-hand how they shall be preserved therein? I speak not this against any magistrates' or people's defending themselves against foreign invasions, or making use of the sword to suppress the violent and evil-doers within their borders (for this the present estate of things may and does require, and a great blessing will attend the sword where it is borne uprightly to that end, and its use will be honorable; and while there is need of a sword, the Lord will not allow that government, or those governors, to lack fitting instruments under them for the managing thereof, to wait on him in his fear to have the edge of it rightly directed); but yet there is a better state, which the Lord has already brought some into, and which nations are to expect and travel towards. Yes, it is far better to know the Lord to be the defender, and to wait on him daily, and see the need of his strength,

wisdom, and preservation, than to be ever so strong and skillful in weapons of war.

3. If the Lord shall undertake the defense of a nation by his Spirit and power, what can hurt that nation? What power of man can reach it, to disturb the peace of it? "The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit." Isa. 31:3. What could Sennacherib with his army do against one angel in the time of the law? How many of his host were slain in one night? And what power then shall be able to prevail over a nation brought into the peaceable Spirit of the gospel, and defended therein by the mighty power of God himself? Will not God be as sure a defense over the true Israel, in the way and dispensation wherein he leads them, as ever he was over the representative Israel, in the way and dispensation wherein he led them? Will he not preserve and defend that nation whom he first teaches to leave off war, that they shall not be made a prey of, while he is teaching other nations the same lesson?

God promised Israel of old, that when they went up thrice in the year to appear before the Lord, according to his command, he would keep it out of the hearts of the nations from so much as desiring their land, much more from entering and taking it from them in the mean time, though they might seem watchful after, and sufficiently greedy of such an opportunity, they being cast out of the land, and having had it taken from them before. Exod. 34:24. The Lord also can now keep it out of the hearts of the nations from invading or prejudicing that nation which he shall first draw into the peaceable Spirit. Or if he see not good to do that, he can defend those that have followed him out of the earthly spirit, wisdom, and strength, by ways that man knows not of; nor may it be fit for him to know, till the Lord bring it forth. Israel of old was not to know the deliverance beforehand; but to trust to the Lord. Under the gospel, the Lord gives more faith than to Israel of old under the law, and therefore may justly require greater confidence in greater straits. And awaken, O earth! behold the Israel of the Lord, whom he has begotten and brought forth in the earth, after the long, dark night of apostasy, and you shall see what hearts the Lord has given them to trust him, in all the straits and trials wherewith he pleases to exercise them, and what the Lord will do for them when they are brought to the brink of the pit, and when it seems impossible for them to escape utter ruin and destruction. The eye which the Lord has given them sees the Lord and his strength; and the heart which he has created anew in them, naturally fears the everlasting power, which reaches both to the body and soul for ever: but as for whole multitudes of nations, they are but as "the drop of a bucket," and, in their greatest wisdom and strength, but as "vanity, as the small dust of the balance, as nothing before him, and less than nothing to him."

Consider this, O you great men! O you wise men, and deep politicians! all you have done, or can ever do, in relation to overturning any thing that God has purposed, what are you therein? Or what will your work come to? It is just like "the small dust of the balance;" it hinders not at all the weight of his power on the other hand, but he will carry on his work, bring to pass what he has purposed in himself, and promised to his people; and all your councils, wisdom, strength, hopes, resolutions, and present or future advantages against him and his work, shall hinder him not more than the small dust in the scale of a balance which the wind blows away, and it is not. Be wise therefore, O you sons of men! fear before your Maker; wait in his fear for his counsel, that you may not be allowed by him to undertake any thing against him, lest before you are aware you fall before him. Oh! let every one in fear remember that passage, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance," etc. Forgetting the Lord in the day of prosperity, causes much increase of the anguish and

sorrow of heart in the day of adversity. O you that are in present power! consider how unwilling you would be to have the Lord turn his hand upon you, and bring you under again! Oh, provoke him not, for he is able to do it, as he was to overturn those which went before. It were far better for you now to fear the Lord, and prevent it, than to bewail and repent afterwards. Oh! reject not the love and counsel of the Most High (which would now preserve you) as those which went before you did.

There is a desire in all men (in whom the principle of God is not wholly slain) after righteousness; which desire will be more and more kindled by God in nations, before righteousness and peace meet together and be established in them. Now such and so great has been the kindling of this desire in this nation, and such is the state thereof, that nothing can satisfy the heart of it but righteousness: this it longs after at the bottom: this the governors which were before might have, and the governors that now are (by asking counsel of the principle of God within themselves, and keeping close thereto) may answer the nation in; but if the consultations be not with the Lord, in the principle of life which came from him, but with the wisdom and policy which is of the earth, and from beneath, and not from above, that will incline to self, and to corruption, and never bring forth righteousness; nor can the blessing of God attend it, nor the peace which accompanies righteousness be reaped from it.

### **SOME CONSIDERATIONS**

**For the Serious and Wise in Heart throughout this Nation to ponder, that they may send up earnest Prayers to Almighty God, and use their best Endeavors in their several Places and Stations, to prevent that dreadful Storm of Wrath which has long hung over this Nation; that at length it break not forth like a Fire which none can quench, or like a Flood which none can stop.**

1. DID not God, by the power of his Spirit in the apostles' days, gather a people out of the world unto himself, and by his wisdom, and according to his heavenly will, build them up into a church, or holy temple, for his Spirit to inhabit and dwell in, and for himself to be honored and worshipped in Spirit and truth, according as he should teach them, and require of them?
2. Did not the same spirit which built this church not only signify that the love should wax cold, and there be a falling away from the truth, and warn the churches of Asia of the removal of their candlesticks, but also foretell of the total dissolution of that building as to its outward state [upon the close of the sharp battle by the dragon and his angels, or false ministers, with Michael and his true church and ministers], insomuch as the church herself should fly into the wilderness, and her seed be made war with, and persecuted up and down the nations all the time of the apostasy afterwards? See Rev. 12.
3. Was not this desolate estate of the church to remain and last all the allotted time thereof, which is expressed to be forty-two months, twelve hundred and sixty days, or a time, times, and half a time, wherein the beast should rule, antichrist sit in God's temple, and the dragon be worshipped there, instead of the living God; and also the lambs of Christ, and witnesses of Jesus (who retain the worship in Spirit and truth, and cannot join with any of the false ways of worship set up in the nations) torn and rent by the woman which appears instead of the true church, but is not? Rev. 11:2 and 12:6.14. and 13:4. and 17:6.

4. Does not this woman continue deceiving the nations and kings of the earth (whom she causes to drink of her cup of knowledge, worship, doctrine, and discipline, whereby she blinds their eyes, bewitches their hearts, and makes them take her for the true church, who, notwithstanding all her glorious appearance, is but *Babylon in a mystery*, and, notwithstanding all her pretenses for Christ, does drink the blood of his true saints and witnesses); I say, does she not continue her deceit till the very hour of her judgment, and until she has brought the dreadful vials of the wrath of God both upon herself, and upon all that continue joining with her? Rev. 17:2. etc.

5. Is there not to be an end of this night of apostasy, and of the false church, with all her various habits, and dresses, and new paints, and arts of deceit, (though both have continued long) wherein Christ, the Lamb, comes forth in his power to fight with the beast, and the woman which rides thereon, and to smite the earth which remains infected with her fornications, (which withdraw and steal away the heart from the pure life and Spirit of Christ, and from his pure, living, spiritual worship, into a false, invented, dead, formal worship) that so he may restore and set up his pure spiritual worship again? Rev. 19:11.

6. Are not the kings, powers, and inhabitants of the earth in great danger of fighting against the Lamb, in defense of this false church against his true church, (when he again comes to set it up in nations, after the expiration of the long night of apostasy) even to the hazard of utterly ruining themselves thereby? For those that fight against the Lamb must needs be overcome by him; his invisible strength, and armies being much stronger than the visible armies, and all the outward strength in nations; though, to the outward eye, such may appear very great and invincible. Rev. 17:14.

7. Shall not the "kings of the earth," and the remaining powers at last (after the overthrow of many for joining to her, and striving to uphold her) "hate the whore" (which has corrupted the earth with her fornications, drunk the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, brought misery and desolation on nations, &., "make her desolate, and burn her flesh with fire?" And were it not far better for them to do it before, rather than to hazard the ruining of themselves by seeking to uphold her? Rev. 17:16.

8. Is it possible for any nation (or any power in any nation) to hinder the shining forth of God's light therein, after the long night of apostasy? There is a spiritual day, as well as a natural day. There was a spiritual day before the apostasy, in the days of the apostles; and there is to be a spiritual day again after the apostasy, upon the Spirit of life's entering into the witnesses, their rising and standing on their feet, and the light of God shining forth from them. The spiritual day depends upon the shining of God's Spirit in the hearts of people (which did once shine forth, and does begin to shine forth again), as the natural day depends upon the shining of the sun. Now who can hinder the arising or shining of the Sun of righteousness in the hearts of God's people? If you can, then may you prevent the carrying on of God's work of reformation in this nation, and throughout the world; but it is easier for you to stop the shining of the sun in the firmament. Oh! that the eye were opened which can see the way of peace, that the present governors might be blessed, and the nation blessed in them, and not the spirit of the nation, by a secret kindling, which none knows from where it comes, brought over them as a flood, as it was over them that went before them.

In that fear which God works in the heart, and out of the compass of that carnal wisdom and strength, on which man relies, is the wisdom, counsel, and preservation of the Most High; both of particular

persons, and also, of nations. O Lord my God! if it may please you, open the ear that can hear your voice, that misery may be avoided, and your peace and blessing may be sought after and enjoyed; or at least some of the force of that bitter storm, which sweeps away and makes desolate, even as the abomination of desolation has entered, and of a long time made the earth desolate of the life and power of godliness, [may be] broken, that this nation may not be swallowed up in the dreadful breakings-forth of your displeasure, but may be prepared by the correcting hand, and fitted for the day of your mercy.

## **A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WHAT THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS DESIRE**

### **IN REFERENCE TO THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

THERE are three things which we cannot but earnestly desire in our hearts, and pray to the Lord for, as the proper means of settling aright the spirit of this nation: as also necessary for the growth of God's pure, living truth, and as just and equal in themselves.

1. Universal liberty for all sorts to worship God, according as Christ shall open men's eyes to see the truth, and according as he shall persuade their hearts by his Spirit; who is every man's master in religion, to whom they must stand or fall in all they do therein. Rom. 14:4.

Now if any man walk disorderly, and contrary to the light of Christ's Spirit either in doctrine or worship; that power which converts to God is to reprove and correct such an offender with the spiritual rod and sword, that he may be again restored to the truth and obedience of the Spirit; but the magistrate is not for any such thing to imprison, fine, banish, or put him to death. For Christ is the judge of his people in the things of his kingdom, Heb. 10:30. and he has appointed to have his spiritual weapons in a readiness, to revenge every disobedience and rebellion against his Spirit. 2 Cor. 10:4. The bringing in and applying of the magistrate's sword to this work, was never by the true church, in whose hand the sword of the Spirit was ever found sufficient; but the false church, not having the sword of the Spirit, is made to uphold herself by the carnal weapons, or else she would soon fall. But the Lord God is wresting these out of her hands, and then his light will break forth without interruption, and her shame and nakedness soon appear.

2. That no laws formerly made, contrary to the principle of equity and righteousness in man, may remain in force; nor no new ones be made, but what are manifestly agreeable thereunto. All just laws, say the lawyers, have their foundation in right reason, and must agree with, and proceed from it, if they be properly good for, and rightly serviceable to, mankind. Now man has a corrupt and carnal reason, which sways him aside from integrity and righteousness, towards the favoring of himself and his own party: and whatever party is uppermost, they are apt to make such new laws as they frame, and also the interpretation of the old ones, bend towards the favor of their own party. Therefore we would have every man in authority wait, in the fear of God, to have that principle of God raised up in him, which is for righteousness, and not selfish; and watch to be guided by that in all he does, either in making laws for government, or in governing by laws already made.

3. Seeing this nation is in such a shattered condition, and there have been so many breaches, parties, and factions in it, that no party might be bolstered up in enmity and opposition against another, but that every party might be considered, in what might be done for their ease and benefit, without danger and detriment to any other party. And if I might be hearkened to, I would persuade those now in power, not to deal with their enemies as they formerly dealt with them, but as they would have been dealt with by them when they were in power.

I would also dehort and dissuade all people from plotting or contriving against this present government (for they must have their day, do all men what they can); but instead thereof to pray for them, that they may see the former errors in government, humble themselves before the Lord, and (by their meekness, gentleness, and righteousness, towards all) show forth the fruit of his long-afflicting hand upon them. But if they shall overlook, forget, and neglect the Lord, who has shown so great mercy to them; and not in his fear wait on him, to preserve for them the ground and interest he has given them; and think that now they are able to stand on their own legs, and by their own wisdom and strength; and so assay to carry on things according to their own will, and in the strength of their own wisdom; and so not mind for what end the Lord brought them in again, and what he expects to have effected by them, but strive again to settle the principles and practices which he has been shaking, according to what seems right and good in their own eyes, measuring things by their own corrupt reason, selfish wisdom and interests, and not by the principle of God, common equity, and right reason; — I say, if it should come to be thus with them, you shall not need to plot against them; for the Lord God Almighty, who, with ease, removed their enemies, and made way for them, can, with as great ease, remove them, and put the power into another hand.

Therefore, all people, be still and quiet in your minds, and wait for righteousness; for that is it which the Lord is making way for in this nation, and which he will set up therein; and he whose desire is not after that, and whose interest lies not there, will find himself disappointed, and at unawares surprised with what he expects not.

This is given forth that the powers and people may see what is the desire of our hearts in these respects, and how upright our hearts are towards them in what is just and right, and that we are not at all against magistracy, laws, or government, though we cannot flatter or bend to them in that which is selfish and corrupt; and indeed against God, and not for the good of men. It was written long since, and intended then for service to the Lord and this nation, and his people therein, but the Lord ordered it otherwise. If he please now to accompany it with his blessing, and make way for the reasonableness, equity, and righteousness of it, to enter into the minds and hearts of them that are in power, it will be a good season for it, and they will find cause to bless the Lord, for putting of it into my heart at first, and for the publishing of it now.

## **A FEW WORDS**

**TO SUCH AS HAVE FELT THE POWER OF THE ENDLESS LIFE DRAWING**

**AND HAVE FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED THE LEADER OF THE FLOCK OF ISRAEL; WHO  
HATH OF LATE LED HIS SHEEP IN SUCH PATHS AS HAVE NOT BEEN KNOWN ALL  
THE NIGHT OF THE APOSTASY**

O YE children of the Most High! who have felt the breath of the eternal Spirit begetting you in the pure life, and drawing you out of this world; out of the vanities, out of the corruptions, out of the course and fashions, out of the invented ways and forms of worship, yes, out of the very root and principle thereof, into the worship and Spirit of truth, and into the fear of the Most High, which is wisdom's place and habitation, where the pure law of life is received, and the salvation begun, wrought out, and perfected. O you dear plants of the right hand of eternity! fear not what is to come to pass in this visible creation (to break the corrupt state thereof, and to make way for the springing up and spreading of his pure life and righteousness, which the corrupt estate, spirit, and principle of the world cannot but oppose, until it be broken and subjected), but sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and let him be your fear and dread; that he may compass you with the arm of his power, and hide you under the shadow of his hand, until he has planted the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, in the sight of all her enemies, "You are my people." The Lord my God watch over you night and day! and preserve his living principle pure and fresh in you, and you in perfect subjection unto it; that you may delight in what he has begotten and preserved in you, and you may be satisfied in the openings and overflowings of the love of his heart towards you. *Amen*, says my soul!

From Aylesbury prison in Bucks, where my life breathes for the consolation and redemption of God's Israel, and for the turning of the captivity of the whole creation. 1661.

## **A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE**

### **PRESENT WORK OF GOD IN THE WORLD**

WOULD any know what God is now doing on the earth, and what changes he is making therein? Let him sink out of the earthly part, even from that which blinds the pure eye; and waiting to have the understanding and eye of his spirit opened in the Lord, let him read these things following.

The Lord God of bowels and compassion, and of everlasting power and strength, has heard the groans of Israel, whose consciences have been burdened, and whose souls have been bowed down, under the power of the beast, under the hard yoke of antichrist, for these many generations; and he is arisen in his jealousy, in his indignation, and in his fury, to break the yoke, and let oppressed Israel go free,

He has already stretched forth the arm of his power; the eye of Israel has seen it, and has, in part, felt the redemption, both inwardly and outwardly, which he has brought to pass by it; and *a song of praise* has been sung to him, who has begun to deliver his people, and who is able perfectly to accomplish the work he has begun, notwithstanding all the opposition he can meet with, whether from within or from without.

Lift up the eye of faith, and behold a great part of Israel already passed out of the land of Egypt, and the Spirit of the Lord awakening and rousing the rest, to leave their dark habitations in the land of darkness, oppression, and bondage, and to travel towards the good land of light, rest, and peace.

Arise, O Israel! shake yourself from the dust, O captive daughter of Zion! behold the courage of your leader; let your heart consider the arm of his strength, and the rod of his power, wherewith he is able to dash in pieces all his enemies. Fear not, worm Jacob, because of your own weakness and unworthiness; your strength is in your leader, and your comeliness not in what you now appear, but in what your husband will put upon you, when he shall circumcise you thoroughly, and roll away your reproach forever.

Was all the strength of Pharaoh able to keep Israel in the land of Egypt, or to drive them back after God had brought them forth? Were all the enemies in the wilderness able to stop their passage forward? Were all the enemies in Canaan, or the strength of their cities (though their walls might seem to reach to heaven, and the inhabitants thereof were tall and mighty) able to keep them out of the inheritance which God allotted them? Your God, O worm Jacob, is the same forever! he has the same arm of power to stretch forth: yes, and his heart loves his inward Israel full as dearly as ever he did the outward. Oh, wait on the Lord! believe in his name, trust his love; hope beyond hope for the appearance of his power, and the Red sea shall divide, and the waters thereof stand on heaps; yes, Jordan shall be again driven back; the mountains shall skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs; yes, the whole earth shall tremble at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob: and glory, glory, glory, everlasting glory, power, rich praise, and endless life, shall sound through all the tents of Jacob in the wilderness, and through all the habitations of Israel in the holy land, to the King of glory, power, and life; even to the Lamb that sits upon the throne, who was, and is, and is to come! who has reigned, does reign, and will reign on his holy hill of Zion, over all the powers of darkness for evermore; *Amen, Hallelujah!*

O you sons of men! how long will you run after vanity, and seek to a refuge of lies for succor and stability, and so lose your share in the everlasting riches and glory, which God is preparing for the souls of his chosen? Why will you die? Why will you perish? Why will you undo your souls? Why do you so greedily sow misery, anguish, perplexity, and wrath for your poor souls to reap?

O God of love! who know the value and price of souls, pity your poor creatures, and put a stop to this course of perishing, wherein so many multitudes are overtaken and pass down to the pit unawares! O your bowels, your bowels, your wonderful bowels! Let them roll in you, and work mightily, and in the strength of your compassions bring forth your judgment and your mercy among the sons of men! Build up the tents of Shem; persuade Japhet to dwell therein; and let Canaan become a servant. Preserve the feet of your saints forever; shut up and silence the wicked one in the darkness; let not his strength or subtlety prevail against you or yours any more: but let the fresh power of your life, and the virtue of your incomprehensible love redeem, fill, possess, and make glad the heart of your creation forever; *Amen, Amen.*

I. P.

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# CONCERNING PERSECUTION

WHICH IS

THE AFFLICTING OR PUNISHING THAT WHICH IS GOOD, UNDER THE PRETENCE  
OF ITS BEING EVIL

Which practice is contrary to the very nature of mankind (so far as it is drawn out of the corruption and depravation), which would be good, and do good, and have good cherished and evil suppressed, both in itself and others

It is contrary also to all equal and righteous government, which is for the suppressing of evil, and cherishing of good; and not for the afflicting and crushing of that which is good, upon pretense of its being evil.

Yet this unhappy error will always be committed in nations and governments, until the proper right and just liberty of men's consciences be discerned, acknowledged, and allowed.

LIKEWISE THERE ARE SOME ANSWERS GIVEN TO THAT COMMON OBJECTION,  
AGAINST AFFORDING CONSCIENCE ITS DUE LIBERTY; BECAUSE EVIL PERSONS  
MAY PRETEND CONSCIENCE TO ESCAPE THE JUST PUNISHMENT OF THEIR EVIL  
DEEDS.

WITH A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THAT SUPPOSED STUBBORNNESS, WHICH BY MANY IS  
OBJECTED AGAINST THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS

Given forth in love to this nation, that at length the true bottom and foundation of a lasting peace and settlement may be espied; the spirits of the governors and people fixed thereon; and that dangerous rock of persecution (whereon both the powers and people of this nation have so often split) carefully avoided by all

BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER

[1661]

PREFACE

THERE has been an enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, from the time of the promise even until now. God, in mercy to mankind, has given unto him since the fall, a seed or principle of life; in the light and strength whereof he is to war against and subdue the corrupt

principle, and so be freed from the curse, and become heir of the blessing. Against this principle all the powers of darkness fight (even in every particular man and woman) until they be overcome and subjected there: and against those in whom this pure principle reigns, all the powers of darkness in the world fight also, striving to make it miserable, and to bring it into death and captivity, that they might keep up the content and happiness of the corrupt state. All the nations of the earth have always warred against the principle of God and the people of his choice. In the time of the law, the Jews were the object of the envy and hatred of all the world; in the times of the gospel, the Jews in spirit were hated and hunted, in that day and hour, not only by Heathens, but also by such as were Jews according to the letter; and ever since the apostasy, by Christians also according to the letter; who are as great enemies to the Spirit and power as ever the Jews were.

Now all the misery of the world, as it at first came by departing from the principle of life, so it has been ever since continued by men's joining with the principle of death and corruption, to oppose and withstand the workings of the principle of life, both in themselves and others. What man is there that has not in him a witness against that which is evil? But where is that man who joins with this witness in him against the evil, and not with the evil against this witness? Oh, how does God's witness reprove for sin, making the heart (which is not sensual and brutish, but seriously considers its latter end) sad because of it! This is God's way of making the creature weary thereof, of weaning him from it, delivering him out of it, and so rescuing him from the wrath and everlasting burnings, which are the portion and inheritance of the wicked. But who is it that does not strive to stop, silence, and suppress the witness in himself, that he might enjoy his lusts, ease, and content in the flesh, by keeping the sight and remembrance of the evil day far from him? And if he can do so, then he rejoices, and makes merry over the testimony of the witness in himself; and when he has so far prevailed, then he is in a good capacity to persecute others, who hear and obey the voice and testimony thereof in themselves.

That which is to redeem the world out of misery is the power of the gospel; and precious is the peace which comes thereby, after the work of the spiritual sword (with the trouble thereof) is finished. Oh, how blessed would the principle and power of life make the world, might it but have its free course therein! Oh, how happy is that man who bears the condemnation because of sin, follows the guidance of the living God, and waits for the day of his salvation! Oh the sweet inward peace of spirit which is enjoyed after the storm, and after the judgment of that which is to be judged and destroyed! And that which makes one person happy, the same must make nations happy. There is no true settlement, nor abiding security, but in the settled and abiding principle. God is arisen to shake the earth, and it can settle no more upon the old foundations: yes, the same God has shriveled up the old heavens, and they can no more be stretched forth again. "Behold I make all things new," says the Lord, in the days of the gospel, when he stretches forth the arm of his power: and who is he which shall venture to establish the old heavens and the old earth, which the Lord God is removing, and causing to pass away, and abolish the new heavens and the new earth, which the Lord God has created and formed, and is establishing? Oh that men knew the place of wisdom, that they might be wise, and not fight against their Creator, from whom their strength comes, and against whom their strength cannot prevail! Oh that men could see how industrious they are to keep up misery, and to keep out happiness! The eye of man, in the fallen and corrupt estate, cannot see aright; and misseeing, how can he choose but misaim and misact? And misaiming and misacting, how can he attain his end? But the Lord's counsel shall stand, and he will fulfill all his pleasure in every heart throughout the earth. Happy is he who is weaned from himself, and begotten in the light of life, which is incorruptible; he shall stand and be

blessed, when all flesh falls before the breath of the Lord, and becomes miserable; and the fall of all the fleshly will, wisdom, and strength hastens quickly; happy is he who is delivered from them before the day of their ruin! which is nearer than man is aware of, or can believe.

## CONCERNING PERSECUTION

BECAUSE men generally, in persecuting, know not what they do (neither whom it is they persecute, nor how they sin against God therein, nor what danger they are exposing themselves to, and what misery they are drawing upon themselves thereby, both in this world and forever), even as Christ said concerning the Jews, who were persecuting him even to death, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do:" and afterward to Saul; "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Therefore, in love to those who are at unawares running into this great error, that they may find the good hand of God stopping them therein for their own good, are these things following concerning persecution written, wherein are manifested,

1. What it is that is persecuted.
2. Who it is that persecutes, or is the persecutor.
3. The nature of persecution.
4. The grounds or causes of persecution.
5. The ways and means of persecution.
6. The ends of persecuting; what men aim at therein, or rather what the spirit in men, which puts them upon persecuting of others, aims at thereby.
7. The color, or false pretense, of the persecuting spirit.
8. The blessedness of the persecuted.
9. The misery of the persecutors.
10. The way and means whereby men may come to avoid this great evil of persecuting others.

Whereunto, in the last place, are added, *Some sad effects of persecution*; to kindle in men a desire of avoiding so great an evil in itself, and so pernicious an enemy to all that is good in general, and particularly to the peace and welfare of mankind, as the persecuting spirit is.

### 1. WHAT OR WHO IT IS THAT IS PERSECUTED

The persecuted in all ages is that "which is born after God's Spirit." Gal. 4:29. He that is new-created in Christ Jesus, who is formed in the image and by the Spirit of God (which is contrary to the image and spirit of the world), and who follows Christ in the leadings and teachings of his Spirit (which is out of,

and contrary to, the course, fashions, ways, and customs of the world), this is the man that is persecuted in all ages. He that is of another spirit and principle than the world, and so cannot be as the world is (being made otherwise by God), nor walk as the world walks, nor worship as the world worships, being taught and required of God to do otherwise; this is the man who is afflicted, reproached, hated, hunted, persecuted. And so the apostle lays it down not only as a thing to be in his age, but in after ages also. 2 Tim. 3:12. "Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Men may talk of Christ, profess Christ, worship Christ according to the way that is set up in nations, and avoid persecution; but come under the new principle, come into his life, live godly in him, become really subject unto the power and direction of his Spirit, then there is no longer avoiding of persecution. That which comes into the life of Christ comes presently into a proportion of suffering from that which is contrary to his life.

## **2. WHAT OR WHO IT IS THAT PERSECUTES, OR IS THE PERSECUTOR**

The persecutor, in all ages, is that which is after the flesh. That spirit and principle in man which is from beneath, puts the men in whom it is, upon persecuting the other principle, and the persons in whom it appears. Or more plainly thus: that which is of the world, that which loves the world, and present state thereof, that which lies in the darkness, is in unity with it, loves it, and the corrupt ways thereof; that hates the light, and persecutes the children of the light, who are witnesses against, and reprovers of the darkness. John 3:20. "He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." So it was formerly, so it is also now, says the apostle. Gal. 4:29. Now there are several sorts and ranks of these; as some in the way of open profaneness and wickedness, some more civilized, and of a more gentle, noble, and considerate spirit and temper, some more religious and devout in worships (though not rightly principled and guided, but turned aside to some inventions or other of the earthly spirit, all which are pleasing to the earthly spirit), but all these, though they are different one from another, and agree not well among themselves, but are full of dislikes one toward another; yet they all agree in this; namely, in a willingness to have that persecuted and subjected which is of a contrary spirit and nature to them all. They are all against this more or less; though not all against it in the same degree of heat and vehemency.

## **3. THE NATURE OF PERSECUTION, OR WHAT IT IS TO PERSECUTE**

Persecution is the opposition of the flesh against the Spirit. The fretting or dashing of the earthly spirit, or spirit of man corrupted, against that which is born of God: the fighting of the unregenerate and unrenewed spirit in man, against the spirit of man renewed by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God: the fighting, the opposing of this spirit against the other, is persecution. Whatever any man does in his own will, according to his own wisdom, and after the inclination of his own heart, against another who desires to fear the Lord (who waits on him for the counsel and guidance of his Spirit, that he might obey and worship him aright), is persecution. The principle of God teaches to fear the Lord; not according to the fear which is taught by the precepts of men, but according to the fear which God puts into the heart. It teaches likewise to worship the Lord, not according as man invents and thinks good to prescribe, but as the Lord instructs and requires. It teaches likewise not to conform to the world, but to deny it, and come out of it. Now the hating, opposing, and punishing of that which is taught, because of these teachings, and its obedience thereto, this is persecution. The rising of the heart against such, is persecution in the heart. The reproaching, scoffing at, or speaking evil of such, is

persecution with the tongue. (So Ishmael's mocking of Isaac Gen. 21:9,10. is called persecuting of him. Gal. 4:29,30.) The smiting, fining, imprisoning of such, &c, in relation to any thing that they do from this principle, is persecution with the hand, or lifting up of the power, either of a particular person, or of a magistrate, against such.

#### **4. THE GROUNDS OF PERSECUTION, OR WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT CAUSE THE ONE SPIRIT AND PRINCIPLE TO PERSECUTE, AND THE OTHER TO BE PERSECUTED**

The grounds and causes which expose the one to persecution, and kindle the heat of persecuting in the other, are chiefly these three ensuing.

1. The enmity of the birth of the flesh against the birth of the spirit. There is enmity in the serpent against the woman, and in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. That which is born of the corrupt principle cannot endure that which is born of the pure principle. That which walks and worships in the will, and according to the inventions of man's wisdom, and in shadows and fleshly forms, pleasing to the flesh, cannot endure that which worships in Spirit and truth.

2. The contrariety of that which is born of God, and drawn out of the world, to that which is of the flesh, or of corrupt man, and left in the world, this is that which increases and draws forth the enmity in the corrupt principle. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," John 17:16. "therefore the world hates them." ver. 14. They are of another spirit, of another image, of another make, of another heart, of another desire, of another manner of carriage and demeanor, of another principle, and have other ends in all they do, than the world. And their whole course and life being in the light, and in the love, and in true purity of mind, reprove the world, which lies in the darkness, and in the enmity, and walks in the wickedness. And how can the world bear this; in the midst of all their height, glory, and greatness, to be continually reprov'd by a poor and contemptible generation, as God's choice in the world have, for the generality of them, always been; even looked upon by the world as the off-scouring thereof, as not fit to be allowed to have a being in it, but rather as deserving to be scour'd off from it?

The light, whereof the children of light are born, and which they hold forth, or rather which God holds forth by them, condemns the world. The evenness, sweetness, and straitness of their manner of life and practice, condemns the unevenness, crookedness, and perverseness of the spirit of the world. The integrity, seriousness, and spirituality of their worship, with the living presence and power of God appearing among them, condemn the deadness, formality, and hypocrisy of the worships of the world; who draw nigh to God with their lips, when it is manifest that their hearts are far from him, being ensnared and captivated with vanities and self-interests, and love of the world and earthly things. Indeed the whole course and manifestation of the light and power of God in them is a continual upbraiding of the principle and ways of darkness in the men of the world. And how can the men of the world forbear making an unrighteous war, even a war of persecution, against that which invades their territories, and makes war with them in righteousness? Can darkness choose but fight to save its own dominions? It must put out the light, or it cannot save its own, but will be losing of ground daily.

3. Because of the children of light leaving and coming out of the world. They were once of the world, as well as others, of the same nature, of the same spirit, of the same corrupt will, of the same corrupt

wisdom, walking in their way, worshipping according to their worships, approving and observing their customs, fashions, and vanities; but when the Spirit of Christ called them out of the world, and created in them that which could hear his voice, and was willing to follow him, then they left all these, and stood witnesses (in God's Spirit which called, and in that life which was begotten in them, and in the fear, love, and power of that God who quickened them) against all these. And this made the world, in that they were once of them, but left them. Had they staid in the world, and been still of the world, the world would have loved them, as it does the rest of its own, but departing from the world, traveling towards another country, subjecting themselves to another Spirit, and testifying against that spirit which formerly led them, and still leads the world, and against those ways and practices wherein they formerly walked, and wherein the world still walks, this fills the worldly spirit with rage against them.

## **5. THE WAYS AND MEANS OF PERSECUTION**

The ways and means of persecution are very many. Who can lack instruments to afflict the innocent and helpless, who can neither resist the evil which is offered them, nor harm that which offers it? I shall only mention here three general heads, to which many particulars may be referred.

1. One great way of persecution is by making use of laws already made, either according to their proper tendency to that end and purpose, or by bending them aside from their proper intent, to reach those whom they have a mind to afflict and persecute. Thus the Jews, when they had a mind to have Christ put to death, told Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die." John 19:7.

2. Another way is, by making new laws fit for their purpose, whereby they may catch, ensnare, and suppress that which is contrary to their spirit and principle, and which will not bow thereto. This is a certain way to take that which is born of God, and which cannot but be true to him, and so cannot bow to the corrupt will of man, nor to any law made in the corrupt will, to strengthen the corruption, and against the holy, pure will and mind of God. Thus Daniel and the three Children were caught in the snare by laws; Daniel, for praying to his God, against the royal statute and firm decree of the king, signed in writing according to the desire and advice of all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, Dan. 6:7,8. and the three Children, for not worshipping the image Nebuchadnezzar had set up, according to the decree of the king. (Observe this by the way, and consider it well: what has been set up all this night of the apostasy, but images of the true worship; and what compelling has there been thereto.) Thus have articles been framed, and statutes made, here in England, (as in King Henry the VIIIth and Queen Mary's days) which have been great engines of persecution; and thus have there been some late laws made in New-England to the same effect, though better might have justly been expected from them. And this is not only a certain way, but a very plausible way likewise, whereby the persecutor hides himself from the imputation of persecution, and appears as a just executer of the law; and so represents him who is upright before God, and innocent in the sight of God, as an offender and breaker of the law, and so justly punishable. But this will not always cover the unjust spirit's persecuting of the just. He that shall persecute the Lord of glory (as he that persecutes the least member of his, how contemptible soever he appears to his eye, does no less, Acts 9:4. Mat. 25:40,45) when Christ shall call him to account therefor, it will be a vain plea for him to say, there was a law for it, and he acted according to law. It is fit for all men and laws to bow before the Lord, and not to disturb any in their obedience to the Lord, or hurt the principle of his life in any; but cherish and nurse it up as much as in them lies, in that tenderness which Christ begets in it, and in that

spiritual liberty which Christ allows it.

3. A third way of persecution is by the hand of violence, without either law, or so much as pretense to law. Thus the persecuting spirit, when it has power in its hand, and is out of fear, smites (with the open fist of wickedness) that which is an enemy to, and stands a witness against, its wickedness.

## **6. THE ENDS OF PERSECUTION, OR WHAT THE PERSECUTING SPIRIT AIMS AT IN ITS PERSECUTING, AND WOULD FAIN ATTAIN THEREBY**

1. The main end of persecution is to bring the children of light (who have left the evil, darkness, and corruption of the world) back to the world again. That which they persecute them for is for leaving the world, both in its principles and practices, and for professing obedience and subjection to another spirit; that which they drive at in persecuting them is to force them back from under subjection to that spirit which has led them out of the world, into subjection to the spirit of the world again. There is a great fight between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world in the two seeds; the Spirit of God striving to bring the spirit of the world under, and the spirit of the world striving to bring the Spirit of God under. This is well known in the heart where the new birth is witnessed. Oh, what striving there is by the powers of darkness, with all manner of secret temptations and forcible oppositions (so far as the Lord permits), to bring the heart (which the Lord has begun to redeem, and in some measure set free from them) under their power again! And the same that stirs up the darkness in the heart against the seed and birth of light there, the same stirs up in the darkness in other men against it also. The Lord knows what bitter fights we have had with the enemy in our own hearts, before we could leave our principles, paths, and practices of darkness; how hard it has been to us to deny the world, and come out of it; and yet when the Lord has conquered and subjected the darkness in our own hearts in any measure, then we meet with a new fight abroad in the world, the same principle and power in them fighting against us, as did at first in ourselves. And as this was the aim and work of the power of darkness in ourselves (and still is, so far as any of it is left in any of us) to bring us back under the darkness again, even from the light and leadings of the Spirit, and from single obedience thereto; so it is the aim and endeavor of the same spirit in others. And if they could but bring us back from our God into the world again, they would be at peace with us, as well as with other men, and love and cherish us, as they do the rest of the world.

2. A second end of persecution in the spirit that persecutes is, to keep the children of light from gaining further ground. The kingdom of God and his truth is of a growing, spreading nature. It is like leaven, like salt, like the light of the morning; its nature is to leaven, to season, to overspread, and gather mankind from the evil, from the darkness, from the corruption, from the death and destruction. Now the spirit of the world, that spirit which rules the world, is loth to lose ground; and therefore hunts and seeks to destroy the vessels wherein the light appears, and from whom it shines forth, and to make them appear as odious as it may, that it may keep all its own territories and dominions in a perfect detestation of them, and distance from them. Thus though the people of God have still been an innocent people, and simple as to the subtlety and deceit of the serpent, and weak and foolish in compare with the wise and strong ones in the worldly nature and spirit; yet they are still represented as most dangerous, most subtle, and pernicious, as shrewd deceivers, witches, Jesuits, etc., yes, any

thing that is hateful and hated.

3. A third end of persecution is to afflict, grieve, vex, disturb, and torment those whose principles and practices are displeasing to them. There is enmity in the nature and spirit of the world, against the holy, pure Spirit and seed of God; and if it cannot overcome and get its will one way, in bringing back; yet it will strive to have its will another way, even in vexing and afflicting. It is the pleasure of hatred or enmity to do any thing which may hurt that against which its hatred is. Thus the evil spirit *rejoices in iniquity*, in grieving and afflicting that which is good. As the Spirit of love delights in love, and in doing good even to those which persecute; so the spirit of enmity delights in hatred and doing evil; even in vexing and oppressing those which seek their good, because they are not, and cannot be, one with them in their dark principles and evil practices.

## **7. THE COLOR OR PRETENCE WHICH MEN PUT UPON THEIR PERSECUTIONS OF THAT WHICH IS GOOD**

Persecution is so hateful (and has such a blackness of spirit in it) that it cannot endure to appear in its own color. Where is the man that would appear to persecute that which is good in men, or men because of their goodness? Therefore all persecutors, though they still persecute that which is good, and those which are good; yet they still represent and charge them as evil, that they might thereby hide the badness and unjustness of their persecutions from their own eyes, and from the eyes of others. Thus the true prophets of the Lord were always misrepresented by their persecutors, even as false prophets, as "troublers of Israel," as madmen, as men not fit to be tolerated in the kingdom or commonwealth of Israel. See Jer. 29:26,27. And those which condemned their forefathers for persecuting the true prophets in former days, yet could also persecute the true prophets in their own days. When Christ himself asked the Jews for which of his good works they stoned him? they said "Not for a good work," or *as a good man*; but *for his doing evil*; for his *blasphemy*; in that he, *being a man, would make himself God*. John 10:32,33. And the Pharisees did not represent him as a good man, as a holy teacher from God, (as indeed he was, though his doctrine and conduct differed very much from theirs) but as a deceiver, a seducer of the people, a mean man, the son of Joseph the carpenter, one whom none of the wise scribes owned, but only such silly people as knew not the law, John 7:49, yes, as a very bad man, as one that was against the worship and ordinances of Moses, against God's temple and priests in his doctrine and principles, and a profaner of God's holy sabbath in his practices; yes, more than this, they represented him as a man that had a devil, and that he was able to do such great things beyond them through Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Could the Jews think they did otherwise than well in desiring such a man as this to be put to death? Might they not well prefer Barabbas before a man thus represented by their chief priests and teachers, who knew and could expound the law, and were best able to judge, as they might well think, both what was the truth, and who were deceivers?

## **8. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PERSECUTED**

The disciple of Christ, who is persecuted for conscience' sake, who suffers from men and their laws for the uprightness of his heart towards, and for his obedience unto, Christ, that man is precious in the eye of Christ, and has his blessing with him; yes, the more men disesteem and hate him upon this account the greater is his blessedness. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall



say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Mat. 5:11,12. He is blessed in several respects.

1. That man is in that spirit, and in that way, which God has chosen, and so he is in a happy state and condition at present. He is in the path of life, in the way of peace, under the leadings of God's Spirit. The world loves and cherishes that which is its own, and walks with it; but is at enmity and war with that which is of God. Therefore the world's dislike, enmity, and persecution are an evidence of God's choice, and of a removal from it towards God. It is a happy thing in the eye of man to be at unity with the world, to have the love and friendship thereof, to have all men speak well of one, to be found doing that which is pleasing in the eye of the world, and to be enjoying the pleasures and profits thereof; but in the eye of God it is happy to be in a unity with that which is contrary to the world, and procures its ill-will. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father," which begets out of the world, "is not in him." But he that loses the love of the world, for the principle of God, and his subjection thereto, is in that which the Father loves, and feels the love of the Father opened in him, and revealed to him; and this is truly a happy state.

2. The recompense which God will give to them in the world to come, who cleave to him and his truth, for all the persecutions which they endure in this world for his truth's sake, is exceeding great. "Great is your reward in heaven." Mat. 5:12. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment," but at most for the time of this world, "works for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17.

3. The reward is great in this world also. There is a hundred-fold recompense to be reaped in this life. The peace of God in the conscience, the presence of God, the life of God, the virtue of God, the glory of the Spirit of God, which accompanies, rests with, and abides on, the heart which is faithful, and waits upon God for patience, meekness, innocency, and strength to carry through sufferings, may well be valued at above a hundred-fold income and recompense for all the hardships and tribulations which are undergone for his name's sake. "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." 1 Pet. 4:14.

## **9. THE GRIEVOUS MISERY OF THE PERSECUTORS**

It is a miserable thing to be deceived about that which is good; to put good for evil, light for darkness, sweet for bitter, and so, under a mistake at least, become a persecutor of the good. All good is of God, and he that is against good is against God; and it is a dreadful thing for the creature to set himself in battle against his Creator, and to engage the power and wrath of the Omnipotent One against him; though while the eye is shut, it does not appear to men either that they are against God, or that their danger is so great thereby as indeed it is. The children of God are as the apple of his eye. Who can touch them, and he not be deeply sensible? Yes, and they are most dear to God in that for which the world most persecutes them; and therefore their danger and misery must needs be great; which may further appear in these three respects:

1. In respect of the weight of wrath which their persecutions of others here will bring upon themselves in the world to come: then every hard word, with every thing they have done against any lamb of Christ's, shall come upon them. There is a time of judgment for all that is sowed in this world, and then every one shall reap what he has sowed. And if he that has not visited the sick and imprisoned for

Christ's sake shall hear that sentence, "Go you cursed," etc.; what will his portion be who has imprisoned them, and caused their sickness? Now is our time of trouble; but the Lord has prepared a day of rest for that spirit which is troubled in this world by the spirit of this world; and then shall the troublesome spirit, which troubled the peaceable spirit, and would give it no rest in its following and obeying the Lord, be troubled by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Thes. 1:6,7. And what shall the misery of that spirit be, whom the Spirit of the Lord troubles and fills with anguish and torments, in his fire, and with his brimstone! Oh that men would awaken, and consider in time, and not sell away their everlasting inheritance for a mess of vanity, and transitory lusts and pleasures.

2. The hand of God does often overtake them in this world, and the Lord does many times curse their very blessings to them, insomuch as they cannot enjoy the world with that sweetness and content they might, were it not for the rage and bitterness of their spirits against God's people, and their provoking of God against them thereby. How many of his own people did Pharaoh lose, and how did he break the strength and glory of his kingdom, by persecuting God's Israel of old? How did Amalek cause his name to be rooted out from under heaven? How did the nations and mighty powers of the earth fall upon this account, one after another? And in this nation how many powers have already fallen thereby? *Jerusalem is a burdensome stone* (it was so in the type, it is much more so in the substance), which lies in the way of every earthly spirit and power; which they know not how to build with, neither can they rear up their own building because of it, and therefore every power strives to remove it out of their way; but they know not the weight of it, nor who it is that has squared it, and how firm it is fixed upon the rock. The earthly spirit is never to enjoy any true or lasting peace and settlement (which is the gift of God) until it leave off persecuting God's Israel (which are the people whom God calls out of the world), and leave them free for God to enjoy, command, and dispose of; and whatever holds Israel in bondage, either within or without, must either be subject to the Lord, or be broken by that arm of power which the Lord puts forth to redeem Israel with.

3. By all their persecutions and afflictions they shall but increase and cause to grow that which they strive to suppress. This is misery indeed for a man to hazard his soul eternally, and his peace and prosperity in this world, to crush and suppress a people, and yet not be able to effect that neither, but even thereby occasion their growth and increase; and yet so it is in the day that God puts forth his hand to redeem Israel. The ways that man takes to bring them back into captivity shall be the means of perfecting their redemption. "Come (said Pharaoh) this people multiply too fast: they grow more and mightier than we; let us deal wisely with them, and keep them down by hard labor, lest they grow over-numerous, and join with our enemies against us, when they see their advantage." But they grew and spread the more, upon his wise plotting and contriving to diminish them. And what did he get by striving to keep them from going forth of his land and idolatrous worships to worship the Lord aright, but plagues and judgments upon himself and his people from the Lord? Can the powers of the earth withstand God any more now than they could formerly? Shall he not redeem and bring forth his people from the land of Babylon? His spiritual Israel from spiritual Egypt? Shall he not break the anti-christian yoke from their consciences, that they may be free in spirit to serve the Lord? Can any hinder God from breathing his Spirit upon people, and from begetting them in the image and likeness of his Spirit unto himself? And shall not these be the Lord's? Shall not the same Spirit teach them to worship the Lord? Shall God call them to worship him openly, and shall they not obey him, but worship him according to man's inventions and commandments, or not at all publicly? O you sons of men! be wise; do not contend with the Lord; be not bewitched by the cup of fornications from the pure, spiritual

worship of the living God into man's inventions, which the Lord's soul loathes; nor do not strive to hold any back from the Lord, whom the Lord draws after him; but consider his power, wait to know his work in the world, and do not intrench upon his dominions, but be thankful for and content with your own; and do not provoke him against you, who can more easily take yours from you than you can his from him. And consider this watch-word, in that which can open and show the truth of it; *the Lord has put forth his arm to recover his possessions from out of the hands of antichrist; and* who shall be able to force it back again, to make it return into his bosom, without effecting what he stretched it forth for?

Therefore, O magistrates of this nation! do not make use of the sword to suppress the plants of God; but to cut down that which manifestly is not of God. Look abroad throughout this nation; behold how much evil there is to grieve and provoke the Lord, and to divert good from the nation, and to bring wrath upon it, and the government thereof; strike at that in righteous and true judgment, and with mercy to creatures' souls and bodies. But that which certainly is of God, meddle not with; and that which may be of God for aught you know, be circumspect in meddling with, lest you engage God against you. It were better to let many tares grow, than to pluck up one ear of corn. Christ has absolutely expressed it to be his mind, that he would not have that done which may so much as hazard the plucking up of an ear of corn. Mat. 13:29. But oh, how are the laws and governments of this world to be lamented over! And oh, what need there is of their reformation, whose common work it is to pluck up the ears of corn, and leave the tares standing! The chief cause of this misery (from which it principally arises) is men's meddling with those things which God has reserved for himself, and assaying to do that carnally which God did spiritually, and will do spiritually again, in his due time, when he has sufficiently shown how untoward and improper man's hand is to effect it. The Christians in the apostles' days were "of one heart, and one mind," which proceeded from the power and work of God upon them; and then they soon came into one way and worship; but men will have unity and uniformity in a way of religion and worship before there is one heart and one mind. Now this is contrary to the Spirit of God, and to the very nature of religion, and the cause of much cruelty upon men's consciences: and this has been and will be the constant effect of it, even the crushing, as much as lies in man, of that which is tender, and of and for God, and the increasing of that which is formal, dead, and earthly. Now if ever Christ appointed or intended such a church-government, which naturally produces this effect, let all that fear God, and are of sober spirits, judge.

## **10. THE WAY AND MEANS TO AVOID PERSECUTION**

Where is the man (in whom there is any good, who has any love to goodness and righteousness, who hates cruelty and oppression over men's outward liberties and estates, and much more over the consciences of people) that could not with his heart desire to have this grand enemy removed, both from particular persons, and also from governors, and governments, that peace and settlement might be known; righteousness reaped; all cruelty and hardness in one man towards another removed; and there be *no more complaining in our streets*; either because of *oppressions from men*, or fear of *wrath from God*, upon those governments which oppress? And who would not earnestly pray to God for the discovery of that way and those means, and be very industrious in the use of them, whereby this persecuting spirit and temper might be wasted and dried up in him? Now the way and means whereby the persecuting spirit may be subdued, are diverse; As,

1. *By a true awe and fear of God in the heart.* The fear of God teaches to depart from iniquity, and to

seek the crucifying and bringing under of the worldly spirit in a man's self, and to wait daily to have God's will revealed, and likewise to be made obedient thereunto. Now he that is in this temper of spirit, will hardly be drawn to persecute another, but rather rejoice to see a tenderness of spirit in him, and true subjection of heart to what he believes to be the mind and will of God; and dares not so much as judge him for differing, either in apprehensions or practices, about worship, much less persecute him therefore. But that man who is of a profane spirit, or comes easily by his religion, even by the wisdom, industry, and parts of a man, and not by the gift of God, and is exercised in that fear of God which is taught by the precepts of men, but knows not that fear which God puts in the heart (from which the true religion and worship springs), either of these may be drawn to persecute; yes, indeed, it will be hard for either of them to abstain therefrom.

2. *By a meekness of spirit.* The gospel makes meek, tender, gentle, peaceable; fills with love and sweetness of spirit; teaches to love, to forgive, to pray for and bless enemies: and how shall this man persecute? Can a lamb persecute? Can a dove persecute? Indeed a wolf in sheep's clothing may raven and devour, but a true sheep cannot. As the power of the gospel is known, the devouring and persecuting nature is destroyed; and that being taken away, persecution soon comes to an end.

3. *By a sober and patient consideration of their cause whom they persecute, and what it is in themselves which moves them to persecute them.* The strength of persecution lies in the darkness, in the dark thoughts, misjudging, and misapprehensions about him whom one persecutes, or is inclined to persecute; in prejudices and false judgments of persons and things received; which, by a sober hearing and considering of things in God's fear and meekness, might be removed; and then the eager, persecuting heat of spirit would soon abate and fall, the fuel, which kindled it, being taken away. "The Jews stopped their ears, and ran upon Stephen." Acts 7:57. This is the way of persecuting spirits; they take in prejudices against persons, their principles and practices, stop their ears against what may be said to manifest either the equity of the thing in itself, or their mistake about it, and then run headlong in their fury of persecuting and devouring. But he that is sober and considerate, and weighs the cause before he engages against it, and observes what it is in him which moves so hotly against another, and which is so ready to believe ill aforehand; he shall soon see that, which is always hid from the eye of the persecutor, and find water to cast on this devouring fire of spirit in him.

4. *By a righteous frame of spirit, which is willing to do by another, as he would be done to in the like case.* Persecution arises from unrighteousness and selfishness; righteousness and true equity would soon end it. If no man would make another man's conscience bow by force, who would not have his own so bowed, persecution would soon cease. But this is the great evil and unrighteousness of man; whoever is uppermost, thinks he has a right to bow all the rest under him, and looks upon them as guilty and offenders, if their consciences do not yield and bow under him. And he that newly complained of the load laid on his conscience by others, yet if he can get ease and power into his hand, is presently laying a load upon others. Here is a wrong frame of spirit within, and how can it choose but bring forth injury and persecution outwardly?

5. *By taking heed and watching against the corrupt and carnal principle, with the reasonings, self-ends, and interests thereof, and hearkening to the principle of God, which teaches and speaks right reason.* Man as he came from God, and was by especial favor formed in his image, so it pleased God to place in him a principle of his own life to govern him. This image was defaced by the fall, and this

principle forfeited, yet for Christ's sake (who is the Savior of all men, but especially of them that believe) the Lord stirs up and visits all mankind more or less, by the pure eternal principle of his own light and life in Christ. In hearkening to this, man's reason is rectified, purified, and preserved pure; and his steps here are safe. But consulting and contriving out of this, he meets with that which corrupts him (captivating and misbiasing his reason); and then all his intents, designs, and contrivances become corrupt, and tend not only towards the prejudice of others at present, but also to his own loss and detriment in the issue. He therefore that would be safe in the enjoyment of any blessing which he has received from God, and faithful in doing him service in his generation, must know what of himself is ready to betray him, that he may watch against it, and turn from it; and what in himself is given him of God to enlighten, guide, instruct, and preserve him, that he may hearken thereto, and be made happy thereby.

## 11. THE FRUITS AND EFFECTS OF PERSECUTION

And lastly, To set it yet more home upon all that are ingenuous, and would be worthy and noble, and do that which is worthy and noble, abhorring cruelty, afflicting and oppressing of others; let them consider *the fruits and effects of persecution*, which are very many, and of the worst kind, even suitable to the nature of the root. At present I shall only mention these four.

1. In a great degree, *It hinders the growth of the present good, in every age and generation*, so far as the earthly power or sword of the magistrate can well hinder. Persecution of that which is good by the earthly powers, in its proper tendency, is a hindrance to the growth thereof in their age and day; though the Lord can overbear the malignity of it, and further the growth of his seed thereby.

2. *It wholly tends towards hindering the shooting up of any further seeds of good, which God has to sow in the earth.* For all the seeds of good which God has to sow in the earth, at first they are looked upon as evil; until by God's blessing upon them, and opening of men's eyes through the much suffering of those vessels, in whom God causes the most excellent seeds of his virtue and goodness first to appear, their innocence and beauty begin at length to shine in men's eyes, and be discerned.

3. *It occasions the growth of evil.* For good withstands, opposes, and chases away evil, even as light does darkness; and therefore the preventing of the springing up of the good, is a cherishing and strengthening of the evil. Besides, the same spirit, government, or power, which persecutes and keeps down the good, under a pretense of its being evil, cannot choose but also cherish and nurse up the evil, under a pretense of its being good. For the same eye, tongue, and heart, that sees, calls, and acknowledges that which is indeed good to be evil, cannot choose but also mistake the evil and think it good.

4. *It draws down the wrath of God upon people, powers, and governments*, where such persecution is; where evil is cherished under a pretense of its being good, and the good endeavored to be suppressed under a pretense of its being evil. If men from their hearts do acknowledge the being of God, and his disposal of things; then surely what is truly good in persons or nations is of him; and what is of him, his eye is upon. He beholds the plants which he has planted in the earth, and the plants which the envious one has planted; and he cannot bless that place, that people, those powers, that government, where his plants are crushed, under a pretense of their not being his, and where the evil

nature and plants are cherished as if they were the good.

Therefore he that would not be an enemy to God, an enemy to goodness, an enemy to himself, an enemy to mankind, and a friend and promoter of evil, let him wait on the Lord, for the fear of his name and power to be written on his heart, and for a meek, righteous frame of spirit, etc., that he may consider his steps, and the reasonings of his mind, and not mistake evil for good, and good for evil, and so persecute men for being and doing that, which (might it have its course and progress) would make the world happy.

Objection. But will not this undermine magistracy, and interrupt its punishing of evil-doers, if they should be thus tender and considerate? For what man cannot pretend conscience for what he does? And if the magistrate should hearken to every pretense of conscience, the laws would soon be silent, government at a stand, and every one do what they list, bringing in all manner of licentiousness and disobedience to authority, under a pretense of conscience.

Answer 1. Conscience is of God; and tenderness and conscientiousness towards him is necessary to the receiving of his pure fear, and towards the springing up and growth of all good in the heart. The seed of good is tender; and if it be not received into tender and well prepared earth, but into thorny, stony, or highway ground, it cannot grow. And it cannot reasonably be supposed to be the intent of God in appointing governments, that ever their laws and authority should hurt that tenderness of conscience, wherein his seeds of good are sown.

2. It is true; the corrupt nature of man, which is selfish, and seeks covers for evil, may also seek this cover to hide iniquity under, and may pretend conscience, when there is no matter of conscience at all, but self-will and self-ends at bottom.

3. Notwithstanding this, God would not have the true conscientiousness and tenderness in any of his crushed; nor can it be done by any person, authority, or law, without provoking God on the one hand, or without injury to such who are so dealt with, that is, those who are punished by man for the exercise of that conscientiousness which is of God, and which he requires, and is pleasing to him.

4. It were far better in itself, safer for governors, more agreeable to equity and righteous government, and more pleasing to God and good men, rather to suffer some, by their craft and false covers, to escape due punishment, than to punish those who, by the goodness, innocency, and righteousness which God has planted in them, are exempted from punishment. Yes, it were better and much safer to spare many evil men, than to punish one good man: for mercy and sparing, even of offenders, is natural to that which is good; but severity and punishments are unnatural and but for necessity's sake. And as for that man, who, by his subtlety and deceit, thus escapes man's hand, he will be no great gainer; for God, who is above all, will be sure to meet with him. Yes, that magistrate, who spares some evil and evil-doers, merely upon this account, — lest he should hurt that which is good, the Lord will help and bless; whereas, that power and government which willfully errs herein, the Lord may soon cut down; and that which errs thus through mistake (it being a grievous mistake to cut down the good instead of the evil), the Lord, who loves the good and hates the evil, may easily be provoked against.

5. As government came from God; so the righteous execution of it depends upon God. Every man

needs God's help daily, else he may easily err in his course; and governments and governors need God's help much more, in the many intricacies and perplexities which they often meet with. And God is nigh to them in their difficult cases, who wait upon him for counsel and direction. If the case be knotty, yet if God give wisdom, has the magistrate cause to complain? And will God not assist that magistrate, who in his fear waits on him, and is not willing to spare the evil, and afraid to hurt the good? If there were not so much consulting with man's wisdom and policy, nor such laying of designs and intents at first, as spring from man, and not from God, but a naked, upright waiting on him for instruction, who can only guide the spirit of man aright, governments would not prove so difficult, nor the success therein so dangerous.

### **A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THAT STIFFNESS, RESOLVEDNESS AND SUPPOSED STUBBORNNESS, WHICH BY MANY IS OBJECTED AGAINST THE PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS**

Objection. THAT the people called Quakers are an innocent and industrious people, that they aim at good, and might be serviceable and profitable to the nation in many respects; this many believe concerning them, and in their hearts wish that the powers would let them alone, and make a trial of them; the which they might be the more inclined to do, were it not for a certain stiffness which appears in them, they being so glued to their principles and practices, that they will not bend in the least, nor so much as meet the magistrate one jot in any favor he would show unto them. This is such a temper as no magistrate or governor can bear, and therefore there is a necessity either of banishing or suppressing them one way or other.

Answer. I freely confess, that (looking upon them with man's eye) it may easily appear so to man, who cannot see either from where it is, or what it is, which is wrought in their hearts by God. And how can I blame others for judging thus of them, when I myself should be liable so to judge, if I did so look upon them? But yet, if I had patience to hear them, and to consider the thing in the fear of God (watching against that wisdom, from which the knowledge of the things of God and the state of his people is hid), I see also, that there is some ground may appear unto man, to let him see that this is not such a stiffness and stubbornness of spirit as he judges, but arises from, and necessarily accompanies, a true tenderness and conscientiousness towards God; which to make the more manifest to such as are willing fairly to consider the thing, and know the truth thereof, I shall thus demonstrate.

1. Stubbornness, or such a kind of stiffness and resolvedness, arises from the strength and corruption of the natural will and earthly wisdom. The wisdom which is from above is gentle, easy to be entreated; and the will which is created by God is mild and flexible, and easy to be led by the least child, in the line of goodness. And I can truly say this, that I never in my whole course and involvement with the world (who have long been a spectator and uninterested person, both as relating to the civil state and the various professions of religion, till the power of truth and presence of God appearing in this people drew my heart after them), yes, I cannot but say, in the singleness of my heart, I never met with a more mild, gentle, flexible-spirited people. And he that can reach the ground of the thing, cannot but see it to be thus; for he that is daily exercised in denying his will and wisdom; he on whose back the Lord lays the cross, and crucifies him every day, his self-will and self-wisdom, with all the conceitedness and stiffness which arise therefrom, must needs be much broken in him.

2. In the tenderness and pliability to good, which God begets, there is, and cannot but be, an unbendedness to evil. Consider this, O you that are wise! In the birth which God begets in the heart; in the immortal seed of life, which God has sown, and causes to spring up in his heritage, there is a bowing to God at every appearance of good, accompanied with a tenderness, gentleness, and good-will to man; but it cannot bow to that which is evil in any man upon the face of the earth. Read then this riddle, with a true understanding: the tender one cannot yield, the flexible one cannot bow; but naturally stands upright and straight towards God, even in every thing it has learned of him, and which he requires of it. Thus in the apostles' days, the Christians, though meek, though sweet, though pliable to the Spirit of God, and to all good, yet could not bow to so much as an appearance of evil anywhere, but shun and avoid it everywhere. And if it were not for this kind of stiffness and unbendedness, the children of God could never be preserved in their departure out of the world's spirit, ways, worships, and practices; but would soon be ensnared and drawn back again, by the enticements and subtleties of the worldly nature, either in themselves or others.

3. A stiffness then I grant, an unbendedness I grant; but not of the earthly, not of the self-will, nor according to the earthly; but such as arises from truth in the heart, and from tenderness of spirit towards God; such as is begotten in his fear, preserved by his power, and is necessary towards their preservation who are born of him, and called by him out of the world. And if those, who are apt and liable to misjudge of them, did but see the sincere desire of their hearts not to offend man, but to be subject to the utmost according to the will of God, and knew what breathings there are in their hearts to God (in relation to the magistrate, and when they appear before him), that they may be preserved in the pure fear, and in righteousness and inoffensiveness, and how they cannot but refuse to break any of God's commands, because he is their Supreme Lord, and they dare not disobey him to please man, or avoid their own sufferings from man: I say, if men did see this, surely they would not call it stubbornness and self-willedness, but a pure subjection and denial of the self-will in God's fear, joined with a holy and humble boldness in his power.

4. Let it be equally considered, and it will soon be acknowledged, That the least thing which God requires (the command being from so great a King, upon whom the soul has so great dependence, from whom it has so great hopes, and to whom universal obedience is so due in itself, and so profitable to the creature) is exceeding weighty; and it is impossible for the fear of him, and due tenderness towards his commands, to be preserved, without a strict and close giving up the will to him, and standing in his strength, strong and unbended against all temptations, provocations, allurements, and affrightments to the contrary (and how easily may men call this stubbornness and stiffness!). But this they receive from God, as well as the law of obedience and power to obey; and this (which men call stubbornness) flows in upon them from him, when they are in the sweetest and meekest frame of spirit, most ready to deny themselves, and to yield up their own wills to whatsoever is good and righteous, and so of God.

5. The same thing which is offended at this unbendedness and resolvedness, which is wrought and preserved in them by the fear of God (calling it, by way of reproach, stiffness and stubbornness); I say, the very same thing will commend that resolution and stiffness, which is taken up in man's wisdom, and held in man's will. Is it not good to weigh and consider things reasonably, and then to choose and hold fast those principles which appear most reasonable? What man, but will say it is? And is it not good to obey and keep to that light which is higher than reason; which comprehends reason, rectifying



and preserving it, making it profitable and serviceable to God who made it, to the vessel in which it is, and to the rest of the creation? But "wisdom is justified of her children." He that knows not the principle of the eternal light, who is not born of it (much less by unfeigned obedience and subjection formed into it), he cannot justify it in his paths; but he justifies the earthly wisdom and reason of man, by its setting up *appearances of good*, instead of *good*, and would make all acknowledge and bow to them as *good*; whereas that which is indeed acquainted with the *good*, living in the principle thereof, cannot bow to the false appearance, but only to the truth itself. When man's spirit and wisdom is wearied out of all its paths, and he broken with the misery which will certainly overtake him therein; at last the path of God will be welcome to him, and that principle which, through the operation of God, is able to rectify him and make him happy.

There has long been a peace and prosperity throughout the world in unrighteousness; but the season is at length come for the breaking thereof, and now there is not to be such a settled, false peace in unrighteousness any longer: but tribulation, anguish, and destruction are coming upon the selfish and unjust spirit; and he that refuses the path of righteousness, must not know peace, but be overtaken with the overflowing scourge, and swept into and shut up in the pit, which has long been digging for the wicked; *Psa. 94:13.* and mark this thing following, you that would not find yourselves deceived of your souls hereafter, nor of your outward peace and prosperity here; for it deeply concerns both.

The Spirit of the Lord once raised up a spiritual building, which the spirit of the dragon overturned (as to its outward state, though the gates of hell could not prevail against the being and inward state of the true church) and instead thereof set up an earthly image, agreeable to the earthly spirit in nations, but burdensome to that which is innocent, pure, and spiritual. The Lord God allowed this to stand all its allotted time, and to have power to keep down the visibility of his truth and people; but the Lord has appointed a season to raise up his own building again, and to throw down this image. Now this I say to all men, in the fear and dread of the Almighty, stand still and mark, if all the power of man be able to keep down God's spiritual building which he is raising up; or to keep up any part of the earthly image which he is throwing down. The spirit of man (in various ways) has shown what it judges best to have down, and to have up; and has put forth its strength to accomplish its will and counsel. Stand still a while, and you shall see, that the spirit of the Lord will also show what he would have down, and what he would have up; and he will also put forth his strength, to accomplish his will and counsel. It is the glory and honor of the Lord to carry on his work in the midst of all the oppositions of man, and against the full current of his strength and will. This will make it to appear to be of God, and cause the glory of his name to shine. Oh that men could fear the Lord, and bow before him, that he might be honored in them, and see good to honor them in the carrying on of his work, and so might not be forced (through their hearkening to the dark spirit, and because of their ignorance of, and disobedience to, the light of his Spirit) to get himself a name, by overturning their strength and counsels, and causing his glory to shine over them!

We have been a poor, oppressed people, from the day that the power of the Lord broke forth upon us, and his light sprang in us, even until now: and now we are brought lower than ever, and are in greater danger (to the eye of man) than ever. Yet our confidence is still in our God; and this we are certain of, that our principle (and practices therefrom) shall stand, and man shall not be able to prevail against it; for God will preserve his people in his life and power, and the heads of all that wait upon him in his fear, shall be lifted up above all the swellings of the waters; yes, a song of praise is already prepared in

the heart of God's chosen, against the day of his deliverance. We look not out, but give up our backs to the smiter, as if their strokes were never to have an end; and yet we wait on our God, and hope in him, as if deliverance were springing up every moment. And oh that God would smite the spirit of enmity and darkness in men and powers! And then there would be love, peace, pursuing after God and righteousness, and no more *persecuting* and *smiting* of God's people for the uprightness of their hearts, and for their obedience and faithfulness to him. But be it known throughout all the earth, we are the Lord's, and we must worship and serve him. He has redeemed us (even all of us in some measure, who have known unity with his living truth) in soul, in body, and spirit; and they must all be his in the first place, and cannot bow to man in the least, against his will, or contrary to the law of his pure life, and leadings of his Spirit in the heart. Here is our standing, in the strength of our God, whatever become of us. And here we stand in love and good-will to mankind; yes, to these present powers, however they judge of us; and have been praying for them, and mourning over them, while they have been smiting of us. And when they have drawn the hand of the Lord upon themselves, if the Lord shall please to open their eyes to see what we have been towards them, and how eager we would have had them set footing there, where they might have stood firm and have been preserved, they will bewail as much their dealings with us, as what will befall themselves. The Lord will manifest all things in his time, and give his truth a passage in the earth, and his people a quiet habitation therein, how black soever the face of things now appears, as relating to them.

Oh! how happy will the day be, when the Lord shall have wrought down the selfish spirit in man, and shall have raised up his own noble and equal principle! Then shall righteousness spring up and spread abroad throughout the nations; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.

## SOME DIRECTIONS TO THE PANTING SOUL

**Which has long been traveling in the Letter, but has not yet been acquainted with the Power, nor hardly so much as entered into the Ministration of the endless Life (which is the Ministration of the GOSPEL), that it may feel the Spring, and come to drink there of the living Waters**

[1661]

"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 for, and rollings of bowels towards, those "that labor and are heavy laden," which I find drawings to communicate.

1. *In the gospel* (which is "the power of God unto salvation") *is the soul's rest*. It is the doctrine of 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 it was not the possession of the good things themselves, but only a laboring after them, and a mourning and load because of the lack of them: but in the gospel is the substance, the enjoyment; life and immortality are there brought to light, and an entrance ministered into the everlasting kingdom, where they are felt, 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 would not have them always laboring and heavy laden, as under the law; but he would have their souls feel 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 to the prisoner of hope, the binding-up of the broken-hearted, the pouring in of oil upon the wounded: and he would have the souls of his people enjoy that which he came to bring them.

3. *Christ has plainly chalked out the path of his rest to every weary, panting soul, which he that walks in cannot miss of.* He has cast up, cast up; he has made the way plain in the gospel, so plain, that the way-faring man, though a fool, yet keeping to the light of the gospel, cannot err therein, or miss of the blessed rest thereof. How is it? Why "come unto me; take my yoke upon you and learn of me." He that walks in this path cannot miss of it: the rest is at the end of it, no, the rest is in it: "he that believes enters into the rest." The true faith, the faith which stands in the power, and which is given to the birth which is born from above, is the substance of the rest hoped for, and there is a true taste and some 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 day of the gospel, before the night overtook that glorious dispensation, found "peace and joy in believing;" yes, 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, and out of every temptation, and out of every distress: so that they standing in the life, and in the power which had quickened them, and was present with them, 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; and they sat down with Christ in the heavenly places, even every one 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, and their souls had true satisfaction and rest in measure, and were traveling on towards the fulness.

5. *There is no rest to the soul to be enjoyed in the gospel from under the yoke.* This stands eternally: that which yokes down that which would be at ease and liberty out of the life, that is the soul's true rest; there is no other: and under the yoke it is enjoyed, and not otherwise; only when that which is to be yoked down is consumed and destroyed, it is then no longer a yoke, but perfect liberty. But the

same thing which is the liberty is the yoke: and under the yoke, the sweetness, the ease, the lightness, the safe possession of the life is enjoyed. Mark this therefore diligently: the yoke is not one thing, and the liberty another; but 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, the natural center 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 after the feeling of his eternal virtue in the heart, I have this to say: Where are you? Are you in your soul's rest? Do you feel the virtue and power of the gospel? Do you feel the ease which comes from the living arm, to the heart which is joined to it in the light of the gospel? Is your laboring for life in a good degree at an end? And do you feel 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, and he which led you captive from the life and from the eternal power, now led captive by the life, and by the redeeming power, which is eternal? Have you found this, or have you missed of it? Let your heart answer. Ah! 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 feeling the presence and power of the Lord in his pure, holy Spirit, 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. Now are you 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 but unsatisfiedly mourning after what you lack?

Well, you that are dry, dead, barren, as it were without the living God (that know not the shining of his sun, nor the descending of his dews from on high on his tender plants, nor the care, diligence, and circumspection of the husbandman over his husbandry), oh! wait for the quicken-virtue, for the visitations of the day-spring from on high! that you may be quickened again to God, that you may find his life visiting you, his Spirit breathing upon you, 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, and 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, on 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, that 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, narrow is the way, that leads unto life, and few there be that find it." The way of unbelief is broad, yes, the way of belief is broad also. It is easy for a man so to believe concerning Christ, or in Christ, (as his heart may call it) as to miss of the nature of the true faith, and of the sweet and blessed effects which accompany it. It is easy likewise to miss the yoke, (to take up a wrong yoke, in the self-will, self-wisdom, self-interpretation of scriptures) or easy starting 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

mislearning; a man may so read, and so hear, as that he may be always learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth; never come to the truth as it is received and held in Jesus; but may so get and hold the knowledge of the truth, as man in his wisdom may get and hold it from the letter. And if a man thus miss the way, how can he attain the end? If a man begin not in the true faith, in the living faith, how can he attain the rest which the true faith alone leads to? If a man miss of the yoke, or abide 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 learn not the truth aright of 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; but the way of the gospel must be cast up by God, and the soul led into it by him, and daily preserved by him, and must walk in the path which is proper for it to walk in, or it may mourn and cry all its days, and 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 own those that mourn after, and feel their need of, God, wherever they are; but this I know certainly, that they can never come to the enjoyment of him, but in that living path which the Scriptures testify of to be in him who is the life, and which his Spirit is now found manifestly leading into. Blessed be his name!

Question. But how may my poor soul, who have long mourned, and groaned, and been sick of love after my beloved, but could never attain to the satisfactory enjoyment of him, come to walk in his path, that so I may meet with, and lie down in, the power of life and salvation which the gospel holds forth to the true believer, and which I have been long sensible of the deep need of?

Answer. You that would enjoy your beloved, and feel the rest of his gospel, and walk in that path which leads thereto, wait to learn of the Spirit these things following:

1. Know what it is that is to walk in the path of life, and indeed is alone capable of walking therein. It is that which groans, and which 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 any thing, and 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 shall find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, 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 to overspread and become a yoke over you, you shall become renewed, and enjoy life, and the everlasting inheritance in that.

2. Know in what light it is to walk, which is in the light of the Spirit. There the child is begotten (not in Satan's darkness, or highest transformings into the likeness of light, which is but darkness; nor in the light of man's wisdom, searching knowledge, or comprehension), and there it walks; in that light it fetches 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, but 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. Oh! this is it has undone many, even catching at light from the Spirit, transplanting the image of divine things into the earthly principle, and there holding of them in the earthly part, growing wise by them there, and making use of them from there as man sees good, and not seeing a necessity of depending on the Spirit for fresh light and life every day to every spiritual motion. Thus the traveler soon comes to lose the true path, and instead thereof travels on in a road of his own wisdom's forming; and so though he seems to himself to make a large progress, yet makes no true progress at all, but is exceedingly run out aside in a by-way; all which ground he must traverse back again, ere he can come to the truth of his former state, or proceed in the true travel.

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 sacrificer under him (which every true believer is) is so made by the same power. The powers of darkness are continually at hand, which nothing can stand its ground against (much less walk on safely) without being in that power which is above them. The first coming to Christ must be in the power of the Father's drawing: and no believing afterwards is of the true nature, nor will avail the soul in its progress and travel towards life, but what abides in, and goes forth in the same power. So the taking up the yoke, and drawing in it, must be by the power of the new life; and so must the disciple's learning be. 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 scholar must learn and receive his lessons of life in the same power. Let any disciple of Christ be from under the shadow of the power, believe out of the power, walk out of the power, act out of the power, he is from that wherein his life stands, and wherein alone is his preservation; and ah! how liable is he then to falls, bruises, snares, and temptations of the enemy.

4. Watch against the selfish wisdom, in every step of your growth, and in every spiritual motion, that that come not between you and your life; that that deceive you not with a likeness, a shadow, making it appear more pleasing to the eye than the substance. Every step of your way it will be laying baits for you; and it is easy for deceit to enter you at any time, and for that wisdom to get up in you under an appearance of spiritual wisdom, unless the Lord tenderly and powerfully preserve you: and if it prevail, it will lead you from the path of the true wisdom; it will cozen 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 your false way, instead of the true zeal and diligence; yes, it will hurry you on in the path of error, shutting that eye in you which should see, and hardening your heart against your bosom friend. And being thus deceived, you may be as zealous in your age and generation against the truth, as the Jews were in theirs: and as certainly as they put Christ to death, and persecuted his apostles, though they cried up the former prophets, so certainly you, under this deceit, can not but act against the present dispensation and appearance of Christ's Spirit, and would persecute either the prophets, apostles, or Christ himself, were it their present day now so to appear as formerly they did.

5. Let nothing judge in you (concerning your own heart, or concerning others, or concerning any way or truth of God) but only the 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 can not 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 fetched 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, to feel God beginning the work, and to wait on him for his carrying it on. The feeling 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 quicken, lead, draw, and strengthen; this is the spiritual and true religion: and there is no duty or ordinance of the gospel out of the Spirit; but it is easy crying up and observing the likeness of any of them out of the Spirit, into which observance a strange spirit easily enters; 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; for the apostasy from God is very deep, and more provoking among the Protestants than among the Papists, yes, most of all provoking where it is most inward and spiritual.

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 it 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 find some strength towards God, with some little taste and discerning of the things of his kingdom. Know your weakness, and go not beyond the measure; but in what you have received bow before the fulness, worship God in that, and be patient in what he exercises you withal, waiting for more from him. And when the night comes upon you, and you perhaps are 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 you can do nothing to recover his presence again; no, you can not so much as wait for him, or breathe after him, without his help; but he is nigh to the poor, nigh to the broken, nigh to the distressed, nigh 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 something 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 you who will give you to hope that you shall 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; and he will nurture you up in his life by his pure Spirit, causing you to grow under his shadow; and he will be teaching you to live, and to speak, and to move and act from the principle, 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 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. And thus your heart being kept close to God, and your spiritual senses continually exercised about the things of God, it will be easy to you to know the shepherd's voice, and to distinguish the sound of the Spirit in your own heart: and that which tries spirits and motions in your own heart, will also give you the discerning of truth and error abroad, even of the Spirit of God, and the spirit of Satan in others; so that you will be able to try not only words, but

spirits, becoming acquainted with the anointing, which savors all things, and will give you to judge, not by the words, but by the power: for you yourself being in the power, in the anointing, in the savor, it will become natural to you to feel, to taste, to know and unite with what is one with your life, what comes from the same spirit in others, and 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 others. The beginning of life eternal is in a higher principle than man can come at. Man's wisdom and knowledge of the things of God is but brutish before it. As you come into that principle, abide and grow in that principle, you are beyond man's judgment, and are able to judge man, and fathom his whole course as with a span; but are quite out of his reach in the lowest of your motions, thoughts, or actions; I mean such as flow from, and are comprehended in, the life.

ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER

## CONCERNING THE WORSHIP OF THE LIVING GOD

WHICH HE TEACHES ISRAEL, HIS PEOPLE,

WHO KNOW HIM TO BE THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND THE WORSHIP WHICH HE  
TEACHES THEM, TO BE THE ONLY TRUE, SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

WITH SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RELATING TO CONVERSION, AND TO  
TENDERNESS OF CONSCIENCE.

[date not known]

BECAUSE the *worship of God* is a weighty thing, and there have been (and still are) so many errors about it, and the errors therein 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; and because I have had deep experience concerning the *worship of God* from a child, having traveled in spirit with my God for the right knowledge thereof, and in singleness of heart giving up unto him, according as he has taught and led my poor, needy, depending soul; I say, therefore is it on my heart, to answer some few questions concerning the *worship of God*, for the service of such as both desire and need instruction therein.

Question. 1. Who is the worshipper, the acceptable worshipper in the sight of God? Or whom has God chosen out, to hold forth his worship in the sight of the world, since he rejected the Jews with their worship?

That God has appointed a chosen people to worship him, that I presuppose; though, if need were, the proof thereof might be ready at hand. It is not every man that would thrust himself upon the Lord, whom the Lord will accept; but "the Father seeks such to worship him," John 4:23. There is a capacity



to be found in man, to make him a worshipper; 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 this capacity is, and who are the persons that are found in this capacity?

Answer. The worshipper in the times of the gospel, the worshipper under the New Testament, 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. He that is a Jew inward, he that has the uncircumcision of his heart cut off by the power of God; this is the worshipper, whom "the Father seeks to worship him." This is the sort of worshippers God chose, when he cast off the Jews. God did not choose any one nation, or many nations, instead of that one which he cast off; but he sent his apostles and ministers among all nations, to gather a spiritual seed, instead of the natural. And these alone are 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-Testament, is where the spiritual worshippers meet together. The place is spiritual. As the worship is spiritual, so is the place where it is to be offered. It has a spiritual consideration; 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? Has it relation to any outward place? Or is it in the building which God has reared up in my heart by his Spirit? Which building stands in, and is comprehended in, his Spirit. And I can offer his public worship in no other place, but in a building of the same nature, in a house built of more of the same stones. This then is the way of worshipping in the true Light; various living stones meeting together, every one retiring in spirit into the living name, into the power which begat them, they all meet in one and the same place, in one and the same power, in one and the same fountain of Life; and 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 fulness. 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; and where 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 worshippers offer up to God in this holy place?

Answer. The gifts of his Spirit. These they offer 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, or directions, or reproofs that spring up in God's light, in God's wisdom, they 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, and breakings, and convictions of soul (and such-like inward operations) 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; and the life springs 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 gifts, and the time of them stands in the will of the Giver. *Prayer* is a gift. A man cannot pray when he will; 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, required 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 worshipped? Or did they not rather offer them at the Mount Zion, to which they were come; where the male of the flock (even the Lamb without spot) is known, and the blood of sprinkling felt? Heb. 12:22,23,24. and I 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 instead thereof, which only gratifies the earthly part, but nourishes not the immortal life.

Question. 6 How came the worship of God to be transformed and changed so from the living power, into such dead, formal ways as generally worshippers 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 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.

Question. 7. How long has this been done, and how long is it yet to last?

Answer. From antichrist's beginning, all the time of his reign, until his overthrow. The formal way of religion will never be overturned, nor the power of religion find place in the earth, but there will be still countenancing of formal ways of worship, and turning head against the power and life of the Spirit, until antichrist's time come to an end, and the Lord consume him by the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy him by the brightness of his coming.

Question. 8. When shall this be?

Answer. The Lord is about this work. He has already raised up that which has not been raised up for many generations; and the Lord has sorely smote down the spirit of antichrist in many hearts already; and he is fetching a great and universal blow at him; at which stroke, when it comes from the throne of God, the nations shall tremble before him; and it will be as honorable to wait for the movings of his Spirit, and to worship him alone therein, as now it is reproachful.

### **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 into the 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.

Question. In what condition is the conscience before God works upon it?

Answer. Hard and corrupt; hardened by selfish reasonings and dark imaginations, against the convictions of the light and operations of the power of God, and corrupted with the sin and iniquity that dwell in it.

Question. What does God make it in 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 it pliable to the light and power of his Spirit.

Question. Is only the tender conscience then fit to be wrought upon by God?

Answer. Yes, indeed, that alone. The heart that is hard is inconsiderate of the voice of God, and stiff and stubborn against it; having ever at hand some wisdom or will of the flesh, to withstand the voice and leadings of God by.

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 is alone able to preserve it in that tenderness which he formed it in.

Question. What is it that hardens the conscience?

Answer. The wisdom of the flesh. Man, having gained a wisdom out of the light of God, by the imaginations, reasonings, and strength thereof, hardens himself against God.

Question. What is most necessary for a man to be vigilant in, that desires to have the work of conversion to go on in his heart?

Answer. To 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, 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, but he must be born again, even "born of the Spirit." So says the Scripture, and so says the experience of every one who feels the new birth. And when he is born of the Spirit, he is to abide with him, and learn the law of the new life, and receive power from him daily; or the spirit of darkness will soon get ground upon him, and by degrees be recovering him back again into his dominions.

Question. Surely if it be thus, hard is the way of religion, and few there be who are found in the truth of it.

Answer. The way of religion is hard indeed, and wholly contrary both to man's wisdom and will; insomuch as he cannot enter into it, nor walk therein, but as they 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 must turn from that which is glorious in their eyes, and sacrifice that which is to them an abomination. So that he must look to be condemned by men, who will be approved in the sight of God.

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 still to be the objects of its hatred, scorn, and persecution?

Answer. How can it be otherwise, he begetting them in a Spirit contrary to the world, and which testifies against the world, showing that the deeds thereof are evil? How can the spirit of the world but still turn against such, and hate, and persecute them?

Question. How long shall it be thus?

Answer. Till truth be 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 therefrom. 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 rise over the transgressor: and in that day shall Israel be glorious with his God, and receive praise of him, and be eased of all that has oppressed him.

Question. Is there such a day to be?

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; but 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; yes, and the very creatures groan under the *bondage of corruption*; and the God of bowels hears their cry; and 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 rise in its glory.

*Amen, hallelujah!* everlasting praises to the Omnipotent One, *who was, and is, and is a coming*; who has reigned, does reign, and will reign, over all the powers of darkness, in the pure power and glory of his life for evermore. Let all the lambs skip for joy; let all the stars of the morning shout: for the darkness vanishes, and is passing away, and the light of life shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. *Amen, hallelujah!*

Happy is the eye that sees this, and the heart that prepares for it, overlooking all that stands between. This is the hope of Israel, and the expectation of all that wait for the Lord, which he is hastening upon the earth.

ISAAC PENINGTON

**SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR THE OPENING  
OF THE EYES**

**OF THE**

**JEWS NATURAL**

**THAT THEY MAY SEE THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, WHICH HATH SO LONG BEEN HID  
FROM THEM**

**WITH SOME**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**FOR THE**

**DIRECTION, COMFORT, HELP, AND FURTHERANCE OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, IN  
THEIR TRAVELS IN SPIRIT FROM SPIRITUAL EGYPT THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL  
WILDERNESS, TO SPIRITUAL CANAAN**

**WHICH IS THE LAND WHERE THE REDEEMED SOUL FLOURISHES IN THE LIFE,  
WALKING WITH GOD, AND WORSHIPPING HIM IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**[1661]**

**PREFACE**

SEVERAL things has the life, begotten by the eternal virtue, breathed in me towards my Father for, in relation both to myself and others, from my childhood. As touching myself; first, that I might be a vessel for him; that I might be freed from the bondage of corruption, and brought forth in the image of his life. Secondly, that I might be filled with his life; that I might be satisfied in the presence, and with the fulness of the spring of my life; even that I might have enough of my God in my heart continually. Thirdly, that he would, of his own mere goodness, both preserve the vessel, and dwell in it forever; that so my tenure and possession of him, and fitness for him, might be of his grace, of his love, of his goodwill, of his own nature, depending wholly and altogether on him, and not at all on any thing that can be expected from the creaturehood in its pure state. And likewise, that if he please to use me in any service, it might be of him, and for him, and to him: that he would bring me so low in myself, that I might not be able to detain any of his glory and virtue from him; but the meanness of the vessel might still so appear to me, and also be so sensibly discerned and acknowledged by all other eyes also, that

the excellency of the power and of the glory might run back entirely into his pure bosom.

Besides these, there have been vehement desires in me concerning others also. First, towards mankind in general, that they might have an exceeding merciful and powerful day of visitation, even that the whole earth might be touched with the power of life, and drawn out of the darkness. Oh! how has my soul breathed for lost mankind! and how has my spirit travailed, with unutterable pangs and earnestness, for unheard-of, unthought-of, and altogether unexpected mercy and good-will towards the sons of men in general. Secondly, towards my brethren in spirit, that they might know the day of redemption and power in Spirit, and not always lie grovelling on the earth, and groaning and mourning because of the lusts and corruptions, but might know deliverance in power, and might sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, because of their feeling victory over Pharaoh and the dragon; and might serve and worship the living God in Spirit and truth, without fear of interruption and captivity from the enemy any more. Thirdly, towards the Jews after the flesh, that their iniquity might be blotted out, their wound healed, the pure eye opened in them, and the pure glory revealed to them; that they might know the Shepherd of Israel in Spirit, the spiritual tents of Jacob, the beauty of the footsteps of the spiritual flock, and might travel out of their darkness, earthliness, and literal knowledge, into the land of pure life, rest, and peace, and fresh joy in the living God, whereof their land of Canaan, with all the good things thereof, was but a shadow, and might be anointed with the fresh oil of the salvation of the Messiah, and might become, indeed, a holy nation; yes, a kingdom of priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices on God's spiritual altar.

My soul still breathes to the Lord, and waits on him for all these things; and as he draws my spirit forth, so am I ready in spirit to be serviceable unto him therein. These present drawings and openings of my life, in the Questions and Answers following, are both towards the Jews in the flesh, and also the Jews in Spirit, that they may meet in One, even in the one path and pasture of life, where there is one Shepherd, one seed, one flock, one Spirit, one beginning, one progress, one end, in one and the same circle of life. The Lord my God take it into his own hand, dispose of it for good, manage and bless it according to his pleasure!

I. P.

## **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **FOR THE OPENING OF THE EYES OF THE JEWS NATURAL**

Question. WHAT was the rise of that people the Jews?

Answer. They came of Abraham after the flesh, who was God's friend, whom God took from his father's house, and from his native country (where he was worshipping and serving idols) to be the stock and pattern of the faithful; both of the Jews according to the flesh, and of the Jews in spirit. Of this root, of this stock, came this people according to the flesh, who were a holy nation, a circumcised people, a sanctified people outwardly; and (as long as their day lasted) were the beloved of God, the pitied, the pardoned, the redeemed ones, even until the shadows were finished, and the season came for the substance to appear and be set up in the world; whereof they had the first offer also, and out of whom was the first gathering for the spiritual building. But, they generally hardening their hearts, and

cleaving to the wisdom and knowledge which their wise ones had taught them, (from their misunderstanding the letter of the Scriptures) missed of the Spirit, rebelled against the redeeming power, and so lost their share in the inward glory, and by God's righteous hand were cut off from their outward also, their day being spent, and the blood, not only of the prophets, but of the Son and heir himself also, required at their hands.

Question. How came this people to be the chosen people at first, and so long to continue such?

Answer. It was not for their righteousness, not for their loveliness, or pliability to God above other people; but because it pleased the Lord freely to love them, and to pitch upon them for the people of his choice after the flesh, in the free covenant which he made with Abraham. "The earth is the Lord's with the fulness thereof;" and he may choose whom he will to fill with his inward and spiritual glory, (even with the manifestations of his pure love, life, and presence) and he may also choose whom he will to make outwardly or typically beloved, great, and glorious. He chose Abraham freely, he gave to Abraham a heart to follow him, he gave him the faith and obedience which made him accepted with him; and he chose his seed after the Spirit to be his eternal heir, and his seed after the flesh to be his temporary heir. Thus of Isaac in Spirit, came the children of the promise in Spirit; and of Isaac after the flesh, came the seed of promise after the flesh. Sarah after the flesh bare one of these: the Sarah represented by her (or the free woman which is from above) bare the other. And of Isaac comes Jacob, whom Jacob, who serves for his wife; who flies from the face of Esau, yet afterwards finds favor in his eyes. From this worm do the twelve patriarchs branch forth, who were the heads of the tribes of Israel. Thus has it been with that nation according to the letter; and thus it has also been, and still is, inwardly in Spirit; as the Israel of God, the Jews in Spirit, who are learned in the law of the Spirit of life, can very well read. Thus outwardly Israel was God's child, Ephraim his dear, his beloved, his pleasant son; Judah his praise, whom his heart was towards, and to whom he stretched forth his arm of salvation all the day long. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; and he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he became their Savior." Thus it was with them, till the day of Israel after the flesh expired, and the day of Israel in Spirit was to succeed in the sight of the world.

Question. What was the end for which God chose that people?

Answer. It was to be a vessel for him to form, to try and experiment what his love could bring them to, and bring forth in them that way of manifestation and operation. This God opens to Jeremiah concerning them, bidding him go down to the house of the potter; where, in a parable, they might read their own state, and what they were to expect from God, even to be formed by God unto the utmost, until he had made a perfect trial of them, and then to be broken and laid aside, as a vessel that could never be fitted for the Master's use in this way of dispensation. Jer. 18:4. On the Lord's part there was no defect towards his child, his spouse, his vineyard, his garden of pleasant plants (as this people was in that dispensation); for he was still a Father to them, faithful in covenant, tender in bowels, abundant in loving-kindness and mercies: yes, what could be expected from the Lord towards a people, according to that dispensation, which the Lord failed in? But they were still faithless, continually breaking covenant, erring from his dear and tender love, and drawing down the strokes of his wrath upon them: forsaking the guide of their youth, forgetting the love of their espousals; continually starting aside from the right state, wherein God pleased at first to set them, or at any time



afterwards in any measure to reduce them.

Question. How did God exercise and try them to the utmost, even till at length it was plainly manifest, that there was no firm keeping a people to him by virtue of that dispensation; but he must necessarily cut them off, choose another people, and take another course; if he would have a people for his heart to love and delight in, and for them to enjoy and possess him?

Answer. He tried them several ways, and in several states and conditions; as, First, In a state of captivity in the land Egypt. Secondly, In a state of straits and continual dependence upon God, even for necessities, in the wilderness. Thirdly, In a state of enlargedness in the land of Canaan, which flowed with plentiful provisions for the outward man (which were also shadows and instructions concerning the inward blessedness). Fourthly, In often captivities. Fifthly, In returns to their land again, with settlement and peace, and many blessings therein.

Question. How did God try them in Egypt?

Answer. First, With sore bondage and oppression from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Secondly, With giving them the feeling of their state, the sense of their bondage, and causing them to cry unto the Lord for deliverance. Thirdly, In raising up a deliverer, and giving them a sign of the deliverance by the hand of the deliverer, in his smiting of an Egyptian, and saving a Hebrew. Fourthly, In sending the deliverer to them, with promises of deliverance, and with signs and symptoms of the delivering power. Fifthly, In pardoning their unbelief and rebellions against him in Egypt, and showing many signs and wonders for them in that land, till at length he had brought them forth by his mighty, outstretched arm, even against the will and mind of Pharaoh and their task-masters.

Question. How did God find them in Egypt upon this trial?

Answer. Very unbelieving, very stubborn, misinterpreting his sign of deliverance, reasoning against his promise, because it came not so soon, and after the manner they expected. When he lifted up his hand to them to redeem them from under Pharaoh, to bring them forth out of the land of bondage, to the good land he had espied for them, and bid them forsake the idolatrous worships of Egypt, and not defile themselves any longer therewith; because he was now to become the Lord their God, and to appear in his power for them; yet they would not. Ezek. 20:5, etc. When Moses would have reconciled a Hebrew to his brother he would not hear him; but upbraided him for slaying the Egyptian, not waiting on God to understand the figure, but misinterpreting and abusing it in the fleshly mind. When the deliverance succeeded not according to their expectations, they murmured against Moses and Aaron; and when God sent them again with a fresh promise, they would not mind it. Yet God bare with all this in them, and did not cast them off, but assuaged his wrath, and stirred up his love to make a further trial of them.

Question. How did God try them in the wilderness?

Answer. By many temptations, signs, and wonders; by powerful appearances for them against their enemies; by bringing them into many straits; by unexpected and impossible supplies (I mean impossible to the sight or expectation of the outward eye); as with bread from heaven, multitudes of

quails, water from the rock, keeping their clothes and shoes from wearing out and decaying. Likewise he gave a holy and righteous law to inform their minds in equity and righteousness; directing them in a holy way of walking with God, and one towards another, and chalking out unto them an acceptable path of worship; and this law was delivered in great majesty, dread, and terror, to cause a deep impression thereof upon their minds.

Question. How did God find them in the wilderness?

Answer. Full of discontent; full of murmuring; full of self-will; full of doubts and questionings concerning God's power. They did not wait on him, who had delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh, and from under the Egyptian task-masters; but they murmured against him. They did not wait for food or water when they lacked, but distrusted and complained; repining at Moses and Aaron, and sometimes talking of making a captain to lead them backward. Neither were they content with the provision which God allotted them (that was mean in their eyes), but they would have flesh. Though the Manna (the light bread as they esteemed it) of God's choice, and with God's blessing, had been far better for them, than the flesh, with his curse upon that lust which asked it, and would not be content without it. Again they would not go on towards Canaan, or fight when God would have them, and when his strength would have gone along with them; but when he forbade them, of their own will, and trusting to their own strength, they would go on and fight. It is a sad record which Moses, their tender shepherd (who with the eye of true light had faithfully observed them), left concerning them, Deut. 9:24. "You have been rebellious against the Lord, from the day that I knew you."

Question. How did God deal with them in reference to the land of Canaan?

Answer. First, He prepared them for it. Secondly, He dispossessed their enemies, and placed them in it, giving them an inheritance according to their own will. Thirdly, He poured down blessings upon them therein.

Question. How did God prepare them for the good land?

Answer. First, By many afflictions and exercises in the wilderness, wherein he judged and wore out the rebellious generation, who were consumed with dying, and raised up their children in the awe and dread of his mighty power. Secondly, By giving them a righteous law to walk by in every respect, that they might not be to seek how to please God, or how to walk one towards another, or towards the heathen among them, or round about them; but in every thing might be rightly instructed. Thirdly, By warning them of their own proneness to err from God, and of the danger thereof, both in relation to the loss of mercies, and drawing down of judgments; that they might watch against the erring nature and transgressing spirit in their hearts. — Fourthly, By appointing a way of sacrifice and mediation, whereby God might be atoned, either for particular persons, or for the land in general. Fifthly, By directing them to a principle as near to them, and more strong than the unrighteous principle; whereby they might be preserved in the obedience of the law, and from out of the reach of the curse.

Question. How did God find them in their own land?

Answer. That generation, which was thus prepared, thus taught, thus directed, walked sweetly with the

Lord, and was a precious savor in his nostrils; but soon after the evil thing sprang up again in the generations following, and they did quickly corrupt themselves, departing from the Lord, and running a whoring after their own hearts' lusts. Judg. 2:7, etc.

Question. How did God deal with them then?

Answer. He brought them judgment upon judgment, still weightier and weightier upon them, according as their need required, exercising loving-kindness and mercy towards them, as much as possibly their estate could bear. He sent his prophets to forewarn them of the wrath, that they might be spared, if possible; and when his judgments and severity came, he mingled mercy therewith, that by both he might try to the utmost what they might be wrought to. He tried them a long while under the judges, and a long while under the kings, often recovering them and setting them to rights, expecting the fruit of his rod and of his love towards them.

Question. What was the result of God's trying them under the judges and kings?

Answer. They wearied out God's prophets; yes, they wearied out the Lord also in that way of dispensation. They chose the false prophets before the true, lying divinations before the openings of life, and dead idols before the living God. The kindnesses and mercies of God were wasted upon them, for with his love they were not drawn; the bellows also were burnt, the lead consumed, the heat of the furnace spent upon them, and yet their tin and dross not purged away. Under the judges they tried out the Lord's patient expectation of good from his delivering hand, insomuch as he resolved to deliver them no more. Judg. 10:13. Under the kings they were as unruly (whether good kings or bad kings, given in love or wrath), insomuch as the Lord said, "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt, more and more." Isa. 1:5. There was, indeed, no bending of Israel after the flesh, and keeping him strait to God, in that way of dispensation; therefore must he be cast off; even becoming reprobate silver in the sight of the whole earth, because the Lord would reject him.

Question. How came Israel after the flesh to be rejected?

Answer. His day of flesh was out, and the day of spirit was come, wherein the spiritual glory, which was to succeed the shadows of the fleshly, was to be set up; and so he not seeing that, nor entering into that, his own sun set, and he has abode in the darkness unto this day.

Question. How came he not to see the spiritual glory?

Answer. Because the eye of the flesh was open in him; which eye cannot see it. He read the law in a gathered light, in the light of the earthly wisdom, and not in the light of the spring from which it came; and then how could he possibly understand the law aright? Could he then choose but set up the shadows of the law in the stead of the substance which was veiled therein? He read Moses with the eye which can see but to the veil, and not to the glory which was revealed to Moses, and which Moses hid under the veil. And thus likewise he beheld the prophets, in the days of their appearance; not in the light in which they appeared, but in the light of his own reason and imaginations; and upon this ground the Jews still chose and cried up the false prophets, but persecuted the true. Now not seeing Moses in spirit, nor the prophets in spirit, how could they see him who was greater than the prophets;

he looking so contemptibly to the sight of that eye wherewith they expected to see him? It is the Jew in spirit who alone can see and own the Messiah in spirit: yes, no fleshly Jew could possibly discern him then, whose eternal life, light, and power was hid under so mean a veil. He must be more than a Jew after the flesh, who can own so much as the law, or any of the prophets in spirit; and then surely it can require no less than inward Jewship to discern the Messiah himself. They knew by the letter that then he was to come and appear; but they could not know by their observations from the letter which was he; but alone by the pointing of the finger of the Spirit, which they were unacquainted with.

Question. What did they do to him, not seeing his glory?

Answer. They dealt with him as they had dealt with the prophets before him, disdained him that he should claim to be the Son of God, slighted him, reviled him, reproached him, preferred Moses and the prophets above him (who all did but declare of him); yes, at last they preferred a thief and murderer before him, and put him to death after that manner that the prophets had foretold they would do.

Question. Did the prophets foretell that the Jews would put the Messiah to death?

Answer. Yes, very manifestly, with the manner and circumstances thereof. Daniel said plainly that the Messiah should be cut off; though not for himself. chap. 9:26. Isaiah shows the cause why he was cut off; namely, "For the transgression of my people was the stroke upon him." chap. 53:8. He was the Lamb without spot; there was no iniquity found in his heart, nor guile in his mouth; but he offered up his spotless soul, through the eternal Spirit, as a ransom for the souls of transgressors, and with his bruise are they healed. David shows yet more particularly how he should be cut off, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Psa. 22:16. And Zachary says, that afterwards, in the days of their visitation, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." chap. 12:10. Was he not betrayed by one of his own table? Psa. 41:9. Did they not cast lots for his garments? Psa. 22:18. Was not gall also given him, and vinegar to drink? Psa. 49:21. Were not his bones kept from being broken, according to the paschal lamb, the type? Exod. 12:46. Oh that the Jews could read the words of their own prophets in the light of the prophets, and not in the light of man's imagination! and then they could not but bow before the spring and fountain of that light, as it was revealed in flesh according to the Scriptures, and see how that body was prepared for the light to shine in, and for it to do the will in, and to offer up the sacrifice which God would have, that so an end might be put to all the sacrifices and offerings which God would not have. Psa. 40:6. Dan. 9:27.

Question. What was to befall the Jews for refusing the day of their visitation by the Messiah, and for the putting of him to death?

Answer. They were to be cast off, to become no people, their covenant to be broken, their glory turned into shame, their light set in obscurity, their house made desolate, and the hand of God pursuing this desolate people, making them a scorn and reproach throughout all nations. Dan. 9:27. And is not this come to pass upon them? For what person has been more hateful and hated than a Jew, who was once the glory and envy of all nations? Yes, hardness and blindness have so happened to them, that they cannot see the plainest things written in the prophets concerning the expiration of the day of Moses with all his shadows, and the succeeding of the spiritual glory in the days of the Messiah; but their eyes and hearts are still blinded, and held captive in the figures of things.

Question. Is there any scripture of the prophets which declares that they should be thus blind and hard?

Answer. The Spirit of the Lord in the prophet David (the beloved king, and figure of the Messiah) prayed for this righteous recompense to them. "Let their table become a snare before them, and for welfare a trap. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, etc. Let their habitation be desolate," etc. Psa. 69:22, etc. What is their table? Where and on what do they feed? Is it not on the writings of Moses and the prophets? Now all the meanings, observations, and hopes which they gather from these (being under the curse, and out of the Spirit of the prophets) cannot but be that snare and trap; and that which entangles them deeply to this day is, their misunderstanding and misinterpreting of Moses and the prophets. O Lord, my God, in the abundant riches of your goodness, at length pity them, and let the fierceness of your indignation abate towards them, and in your love open their eyes, to see their state, and what they have refused, and against whom they have lifted up their heel, in their conceited wisdom and knowledge, which they have gathered from Moses' and the prophets' writings, that they may mourn after you, and wait for you in the way of your redemption!

Question. How long is this desolation and hardness to abide upon them?

Answer. Until God visit them with his Spirit, and open their eyes to see his spiritual glory, and turn their hearts towards it. Then their outward expectations and desires after an outward glorious kingdom will soon come to an end, and the Messiah will be known, owned, and received by them in Spirit; yet any outward glory that the Lord God sees good for them, they shall not lack either. This the prophet Isaiah plainly relates to the ear that is spiritual. chap. 32:15. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." They must lie waste until the Lord God please to let forth his Spirit upon them, to gather them into his spiritual glory; for the day of their outward glory did end, and a spiritual succeeded, which they are to be gathered into, when the days of their distress and tribulation are accomplished.

The Spirit was once poured down from on high on the disciples of the Messiah, upon his ascending into his glory, and the wilderness then became a fruitful field, and the fruitful field was accounted for a forest; but over that glory the defense was not so stretched forth, but that a night overtook that day, and the wild beasts made a prey of that vineyard and fruitful field also, as well as of the former. But there is to be a more general pouring out of the Spirit, even upon all flesh, and the wilderness is more generally to be visited, and become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is more generally to be blasted and made a forest; insomuch as all flesh everywhere shall appear grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field, which shall fade and wither before the breath of God's Spirit. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness which is then visited, and righteousness shall remain in the field which is then made fruitful; and righteousness shall be powerfully operative, working out the lasting peace; and the effect of it shall be "quietness and assurance forever." No more war, no more fighting with creatures, no more burdening and oppressing of the creation, no more sinning and offending against the Creator, no more being dispossessed of his life and glory; but the dwellings which God rears up in the last days for Israel, his people, shall be peaceable habitations, sure dwellings, and quiet resting-places for evermore. Oh, let Israel feel that which is able to awaken him, and wait for this!

Question. How shall they be visited and gathered?

Answer. By the new covenant, by the new law of the Messiah, which is to go forth out of the New Zion, and by the word of the Lord, which is to issue out of the New Jerusalem: not by the covenant of Moses (their eyes may fail in hoping and looking out that way), but by the covenant of the Messiah, where the law of the life is written; not in tables of stone, or outward writings of the letter, but in the heart by the Spirit. There they shall be cleansed by inward water, receive the inward circumcision, and mark of the inward Jew; be sprinkled with the everlasting blood of the Lamb, and taught to offer up the spiritual sacrifice, and shall hear the voice which will tell them of the way, and which will lead them in paths they have not known. There the spiritual seed, the spiritual Israel, shall find the Shepherd of Israel, who leads into the land of life, puts forth his sheep into the pastures of life, gives them of the living streams to drink begetting them as heirs of, and bringing them up in, the everlasting power and dominion of the life.

Question. How may old Israel enter into this path, and so become new Israel?

Answer. By waiting on the Lord for the closing of that eye which is wise according to the flesh, and for the opening of that eye which is at first weak in spirit. There must be a low beginning: Israel must know and not despise the day of small things, if ever he will grow up into the riches and inheritance of his glory. There is a light in every heart at first, which gives a sound in the natural vessel, which is very hardly distinguishable from the natural, till, by obedience and subjection thereto, its living touch, virtue, and power comes to be felt and distinguished; but in the meek, humble, believing, and obedient, it daily appears more and more, and makes itself more clearly manifest to them who are walking on unto the kingdom and inheritance in it, while others are disputing about it.

Question. How may Israel believe, and become subject to the light?

Answer. When there is a drawing felt in the heart, either to good, or against evil, he must not dispute concerning it on the one hand, nor run on in the forwardness on the other (for both these ways the breathings of the Spirit on him, and springings up of the good seed in him, are easily quenched); but in the fear he is to trust himself with what his heart certainly feels in the drawing virtue, and in the humility to give up the members to the good, and to withhold them from the evil, waiting for strength from the fountain of strength towards both. By this means there is a travel and removal out of the corruption and filth of the heart, into the pure, holy law, nature, image, and will of God.

Question. Where does God find the heart, when he first visits it with his light?

Answer. In Egypt, in the darkness, in the bonds and captivity of death.

Question. What does the Lord do with it there?

Answer. He exercises it awhile there, till he has made it fit for a wilderness-state.

Question. What does he do with it then?

Answer. He brings it into the wilderness which he has fitted it for.

Question. What does he do with it in the wilderness?

Answer. He prepares it for, and leads it towards, the land of life.

Question. What does he do with it then?

Answer. He gives it an entrance into the everlasting kingdom (which is the land of life) according as he has prepared and fitted it. That which is new-begotten, new-created and formed, new-born in the Messiah's eternal light, finds an entrance into, and a habitation in, the light, and is not turned back into the land of darkness; it abiding in the virtue and principle of its life, although sometimes it may be exercised with the darkness for its further advantage. "You are our habitation from everlasting to everlasting," says the child of light unto the Father of spirits, in all ages and generations.

Now that Israel after the flesh may the better understand the path of the spiritual Israel in the way of redemption, by the powerful visitations of the light of the Messiah in their hearts and consciences, and may know the gospel of his salvation, which is able to effect that which the law of Moses could not, because of the weakness of the flesh on their parts; let them in fear, and silence of the natural wisdom, and in waiting on the Lord in spirit, consider the Questions and Answers following, relating to spiritual Israel.

### **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

For the direction, comfort, help, and furtherance of God's spiritual Israel, in their travels in Spirit from spiritual Egypt, through the spiritual wilderness, to spiritual Canaan

Which is the land where the redeemed soul flourishes in the Life, walking with God, and worshipping him in Spirit and Truth

Question. WHAT is the gospel?

Answer. A good message, or glad tidings to man, in the fallen estate, concerning a promise of redemption out of it.

Question. Is man then in a fallen estate?

Answer. His present temper, constitution, disposition, and whole course, upon the least touch of God upon his spirit, do in some measure discover his fall unto him, through the insensibleness which is come upon him by his grievous wound; and death, through the fall, makes him very unapt to take notice thereof.

Question. What was his estate before his fall?

Answer. A state of glory and blessedness, wherein he came pure out of the hands of his Creator, was fitted for his use, service, enjoyment, and delight, even for him to appear or disappear in, and exercise according to his pleasure.

Question. Wherein did his glory and blessedness consist?

Answer. Chiefly in these four things; namely, in the light, in the life, in the liberty in which the vessel was formed, and in the indwelling and appearing of the Creator there, according to his pleasure.

Question. Open this a little further.

Answer. Man was made a vessel of light, a vessel of life, a vessel of pure freedom. He was formed in the eternal image and had a pure being in that image. He was light in the Lord, living in the Lord, free unto all good, and from all evil in the Lord. This was the state of his being at first, and thus was he made in the image a pure resemblance of the eternal purity and blessedness: but, besides this, he had the eternal life, the eternal substance, the eternal purity itself dwelling in the vessel, shining in it, and manifesting itself from it according to its pleasure.

Question. How came man to fall from this estate?

Answer. Not willingly, not of an inclination of his own; but he was deceived, through the subtlety of temptation, to entertain a desire of enlarging his blessedness, out of the limits of the will of his Creator.

Question. How could such a temptation enter man, he being pure and holy, inclined to good, and against evil, after the image of his Creator?

Answer. Man was not made to enjoy a perfection in himself separate from his Creator, or to live of himself, but by dependence. Now though he had no inclination in him not to depend, or to seek a life in himself out of the fountain, yet there was a capacity of so doing: before which capacity the tempter laid his bait of advancing him to a greater wisdom, glory, and excellency than his Creator had placed him in; with which he consulting out of the dependence upon his Creator fell from that which alone was able to uphold him in the pure state wherein he was made. Thus was he taken in the snare of misery, and brought to that loss which all the sons of Adam lie grovelling under to this day, when the Lord at any time awakens the sense thereof in them.

Question. What was the state of man in and since the fall?

Answer. A state of darkness, a state of death, a state of deep captivity, wherein his soul, body, and spirit are 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 thereto, who 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 else 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, the bodily members the same, as to their being or matter; but they are all otherwise leavened, and another king now dwells in them, and reigns over them.



Question. Then there needs not any dissolution of man's reason, or bringing it to nothing, in relation to man's recovery; but only a changing of the heaven.

Answer. Man is 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 very naturals, 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, or rather as a seed to be cast into the womb of life, there to be formed and born of the Spirit. And as he springs up in the life, he is to forget his own country, living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit; where watching to the Spirit, and against his own reason in the pure childishness, in the simple instinct and naturalness of the life, he shall at length find a reason new-formed and springing up in him; which waiting on the Lord in obedience and subjection, shall be taken into unity with the life. But if the eye of reason open too fast, and be not kept down to the light of life, the betrayer will enter again at that door, and bring the soul into death, 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 so to do, without some light shining upon him from the Redeemer. How can darkness discover darkness? That which makes manifest the darkness is light. When the vessel is dark, and the prince of darkness fills it, and dwells in it, what can that eye see but according to the darkness, judging evil good, and good evil, bitter sweet, and sweet bitter.

Question. But there is no man but has some light; no man but at some time or other sees good or evil in some measure.

Answer. That 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, or light him out 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, wherein is some manifestation to man, and some certain sight by him both of the good and of the evil; and not only so, but there is also the living Spirit striving with him, and attracting him from the one to the other, according to the Lord's good pleasure, who is both the light, and also the determination of the proportion of every man's visitation by it.

Question. But has not man naturally a light in the fallen estate, which discovers unto him the good and evil?

Answer. Not a true light, not a true discovery; but only something which the enemy sets up in man as such, to keep him in the entanglements of the deceit, and out of 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 he discerns not 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 do not at present appear to man what they are, but are miscolored, or painted, to appear what they are not, the better to deceive, bewitch, and entangle man therein. The enemy did not represent darkness in its black hue, death and captivity in its dreadful appearance, to Adam; but as wisdom, as light, as a better life, as a greater freedom. And thus he still enters man, and after this manner he still dwells in man,

until the true light pursue him, opening and discovering his deceit, and drawing man back from this false paradise of pleasure in wisdom and liberty out of the life, into a sense of his lack of, and breathings 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; and by this means does he so pleasingly situate himself and take up his habitation in the kingdom of darkness, wherein are strong-holds and wise reasonings against the true God, and for the false appearances of good, which the enemy of the soul strongly makes men believe to be such as he represents them for in the darkness. Thus in particular persons, and also in societies, evil is pursued after, and advanced for good, and the true good suppressed as evil, through the working of the mystery of darkness in men's hearts.

Question. What then is the proper estate and condition of man in the fall?

Answer. A state of false light, of false life, of false liberty. He seems to himself advanced in wisdom above the low, empty, naked estate of innocency, which is nothing, and has nothing, but by a continual dependence on the goodness of the Creator. He seems also 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 is a yoke, a bond, in his eye; he is free from the restraint of it; he has life in himself, and is exceeding wise in the compass of his own dominions. Thus does the enemy transform the kingdom of darkness and death, giving fallen man a share with him in it, while he remains his willing subject. And here the goods of the enemy, the heart estranged from God, yes, not only the devout and zealous worshipper in invented forms, but also the gross sinner, the envious, lustful, and wicked mind, the perverse tongue, the bloody hands and feet, are at peace, and have joy and pleasure in their course and circuit in the earth. But all this is but the deceit of the enemy wherewith he has cheated man with false appearances and representations instead of the true, as man himself will see, whenever the eye of his soul comes to be thoroughly awakened by the eternal light, whether here or hereafter.

Question. What 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 strong-holds of the enemy in the mind, all the reasonings, thoughts, imaginations, and consultations, which are not of the pure, nor in the pure; and so to new-create and new-form the vessel in the image of the wisdom and purity wherein it was at 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 in the creation, the same goes forth from the bosom of the Father to purify the creature, and so brings 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 up his birth with his flesh and blood unto life everlasting.

Question. What is this life? Or how does it first manifest itself in the darkness?

Answer. It is the light of men. It is that which gave light to Adam at first, again to him after the fall, and to all men since the fall. It enlightens in nature; it enlightened under the law; it did enlighten under the gospel before the apostasy, and again since the apostasy.

Question. How does the light enlighten?

Answer. By its shining. The eternal Word moves, the life opens, the light shines: this, in the least degree, is a beginning of redemption; in its fulness it is redemption perfected.

Question. How does the light work redemption in its shining?

Answer. Two ways: first, By turning the heart from the darkness towards itself; secondly, By exercising the heart, being turned.

Question. How does it turn the heart from the darkness?

Answer. The light, by its shining and enlightening, finds out its own, opens it, and touches it with a secret virtue, which persuades out of, and draws the heart from, the principle and power of death and darkness, towards its own native spring.

Question. May not these drawings be quenched, and the work of God stopped?

Answer. The plant of the Lord is exceeding tender, his pure Spirit jealous, the enemy very strong and subtle; insomuch as the plant itself may easily be crushed, the Spirit grieved and quenched, and the captivity redoubled.

Question. If Adam was betrayed in his full strength, how shall this poor, weak plant spring up and grow, without being supplanted by the violence and treachery of the enemy? Or how shall the grieving of the Spirit be avoided by a heart so full of corruption and provocations, as man in the alienated state is, when the light first visits him?

Answer. The Lord God is nigh to help, nigh to pity, nigh to pardon, nigh to watch over and support worm Jacob: yes, nigh to revive life and spirit in him freely, and to heal his backslidings, and multiply pardons, or it could never be. Yes, the creature can never be brought so low, or so far lost, but there is still help in the nature of God concerning him, though there may not be help in any revealed promise.

Question. How does God exercise the heart which is turned?

Answer. In faith and obedience, through very great varieties and changes of conditions. He exercises it

in believing his voice, and in obeying his voice, and following him, in whatever, and into whatsoever, he draws and requires.

Question. How is the voice of God known? Does not the enemy speak inwardly also, and resemble his voice? How then is the voice of the redeemer distinguished from him who counterfeits the Shepherd and his voice?

Answer. By these two means:

First, the soul lying low, out of the wisdom in which the enemy appears and forms his likenesses; in the simplicity which the Lord has begotten, the life opens to it, and the true light appears, which manifests the false light, and false appearances of the deceiver.

Secondly, In that which is begotten of God there is not a hastiness or suddenness to determine; but a silent waiting on the Lord in subjection, till the life speak, and make things manifest. Thus the knowledge and light of the child is held in the will of the Father, and received from his hand, and according to his pleasure. Thus what he will he hides, and what he will he makes manifest, and the child, which is born of his will, is content with his will; and lying down there, it keeps out of the enemy's territories, and of the reach of his temptations.

Question. What are the several estates or conditions wherein God exercises the spirit of man in faith and obedience?

Answer. The particular estates and conditions are innumerable; but they may be referred to these three general heads: First, An estate of breaking down the former building. Secondly, An estate of devastation or preparation to be new built. Thirdly, An estate of rebuilding. God does not forget, but exercise his people in Egypt, even while they are in bondage, before they come to receive his law. He is visiting them in the dark land, opening the eye that can see the captivity, causing groans and sighs in their oppressed spirits, and then holding forth to them the promise, and preparing them for a departure from that land. Secondly, He has a time of stripping them, of nurturing and bringing them up under his discipline and close exercises, wherein they are desolate, and ready to sin and perish every moment; but as they are wonderfully provided for, and abundantly helped and pardoned. Thirdly, There is a state of rebuilding the stones, when they are prepared therefor, into a new building for the life to dwell in, and for their entrance into the land of life.

Question. Declare these estates, and the exercises therein more plainly; and first show what is the estate of the soul in Egypt spiritually, when the Lord visits it there with his light.

Answer. An estate of deep bondage and groaning under the powers of darkness, whose bitter oppressions thereof increase, even as the sensibleness and tiredness of the soul increases. The soul then sees its captivity from the life, and finds a building of death and corruption raised up in it, in which the prince of darkness dwells and bears rule: and then, oh, how it groans and longs after departure from that land, and waits for the promise of redemption out of it! But yet it is still left in the hand of the enemy, and daily feels the bitter bondage, from the powerful law of sin and death springing up in the heart, and issuing out through the members.

Question. How is faith and obedience here exercised?

Answer. In believing the promise, in waiting for the promise, in feeling some remote drawings of the life, and uniting therewith, so far as is possible in this dark, captivated estate. There is an acknowledgment of the true prince, and a bowing to him even in this estate of captivity, until he please to break the bands thereof, and receive under his guidance.

Question. What is the estate of the wilderness spiritually?

Answer. It is an estate of waiting for the guidance of the leader; of receiving direction and laws from the leader; of following the leader as he pleases to lead, through the entanglements, temptations, straits, and necessities which he sees fit to exercise the spirit with, for the wearing out of that which is not to inherit, and for preparing the heir for the inheritance.

Question. How is faith and obedience here exercised?

Answer. In waiting on the light for the leadings in the law of life, and then in subjecting to the leader, being content with all his dispensations therein; with the time he chooses for standing still, and with the time he chooses for traveling on; with the proportion of light and leading that he judges fit, with the food and clothing which he prepares and preserves; with the enemies which he sees fit to have avoided or encountered with. Hereby the own wisdom, the own will, the own strength, the own desires, the own delights, with all the murmurings, weariness, and discontents, which arise from the earthly part, are by degrees worn out, and a pure vessel prepared for the pure birth to spring up and appear in.

Question. What is spiritual Canaan, or the heavenly-built state, or state of the gospel?

Answer. A state of regenerating or renewing in the life and pure image; where the building is reared up which is made without hands; where there is a sweet and peaceable growth in the life, and a fresh and satisfactory enjoyment of the life.

Question. How is faith and obedience here exercised?

Answer. In abiding in the vine, in drawing from the vine, in returning the sap and virtue back into the vine; and living according to the will, and in the free dispensation thereof. Thus works are excluded, with self, from whom they proceed, and the vine becomes all in all.

Question. Are Egypt and the wilderness and Canaan, spiritually, as distinct estates as they were literally?

Answer. There are such distinct several estates spiritually, wherein a man may be spiritually in Egypt, and neither in the wilderness nor Canaan. So there is an estate in the wilderness, which is out of Egypt, and not in Canaan; and an estate in Canaan, which is beyond both Egypt and the wilderness. Yet these estates in spirit are oftentimes interwoven, with the exercises thereof; insomuch as the soul may, in part, or in some respect (to his own understanding), be in Egypt; in part in the wilderness, and in part in the rest, life, and peace. But these things are not to be curiously sought into, lest a wrong wisdom and a knowledge get up; but abiding low and little in the little seed, the kingdom and everlasting

inheritance grows daily in the soul, and the soul daily shoots up into it, and is enlarged in it.

Question. Is there any return back into Egypt, or into the wilderness, after the state of the soul is advanced higher; the entrance into the everlasting inheritance being administered, and the soul partly taken into, and having found a place of rest in, the life?

Answer. The enemy lies near to deceive; and while he has power to tempt, if there be a hearkening to his temptations, there is a departure from the pure life, and a return of the captivity or bewildering in some measure. In the faith and in the obedience to the light of life is the preservation; out of it is death and destruction eternally.

Question. Is not the Pure Being untouched by death and destruction? And shall not the creature, when it is redeemed into him, be as he is?

Answer. The Pure Being cannot be impure, evil cannot enter upon him, it has no place in him, his nature excluding it; nor can it enter into the principle of life that comes from him, and is always preserved by him; nor can it enter upon that man who is begotten of that principle, abides with it, and is preserved in it. But so to be in him, as to abide and not go forth, is a great state, even higher than the first Adam knew.

Question. But are not light and darkness, good and evil, all alike to God? And shall they not be so also to him, who is in perfect unity and fellowship with God?

Answer. All the light and darkness, good and evil, which can issue from the creature, cannot reach God's being as it is in itself, but only so far as he has pleased to expose his life (in the various manifestations thereof) to be reached thereby. Yet his eye sees the evil and the good; the perfection and the imperfection, and his nature is perfectly excluded from all evil and imperfection, insomuch as he cannot possibly lie or deceive, or be unrighteous or unmerciful in any of his dispensations; and that which is gathered into him, is thus one with him. But that which can do any thing which is sinful and evil in itself, is not in the true unity with the eternal Being, but in the deceit of that spirit which errs from him, and enters the creature in the imagined likeness of his life and happiness.

Question. How far may persons go, and yet be liable to the enemy's snare?

Answer. Very far. They may come out of Egypt; they may pass through the wilderness; they may receive an inheritance or portion in the holy land; they may have houses and vineyards which they builded not nor planted; they may have had deep draughts of the life, deep incomes of the love, large riches of the grace, and precious tastes of the fulness. They may have been in the Paradise of God; may have been anointed by God; may have stood upon his holy mountain, and walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, etc., and yet the enemy may have leave to tempt, and may find entrance for his temptation; advancing above his estate in the deceivableness, and increasing the glory in the eye of the wisdom which he steals in; and so hold the spirit captive in his golden chains, and lead it back again to the chambers of death.

Question. How does, or can, the enemy prevail over persons in so glorious an estate?

Answer. By opening a larger eye in them, than is given them in the life to see with. The eye of life is limited in man, and man is to be held within the limits and openings of life; and his heart and mind to be bounded within the desires and delights which arise from the life: he is to wait on the life, for its living, moving, and being all in his being: and here he shall be large enough, and full enough, and wise enough, and happy enough. But there is something which presents to him a kingdom, a riches, a dominion, a vastness of perfection in himself, and at his own command; the which, he beginning to listen unto, the same opens an eye in him to see the beauty and glory thereof, and then immediately his heart is taken, and he cannot avoid the snare; nor can he henceforth know where he is, until that which he has forsaken again please to visit him, and to discover to him his iniquity and error from the true root.

Question. What is the way of safety, when God enlarges the territories of life in the soul, and causes his love and grace to abound?

Answer. To drink the draughts of joy and sweetness in the pure fear and trembling; not departing therefrom in whatever it does for God, or receives from him, till the salvation be wholly wrought out and perfected, the habitation of unspotted love prepared, and the soul led into, and seated in, its complete mansion therein. And then the name of fear is no more heard of in the land of life; though the principle from which the fear sprang, and the birth and building (which was begotten, raised up, formed, and perfected in the fear) abides forever. So that the pure love does not cast out the pure fear (wherein is no bondage of the life, but the preservation of the life from the bondage), but swallows it up and comprehends it. For the pure fear is but love descended, and the pure love is but fear ascended; the eternal principle or substance being one and the same in both.

Question. Is there then such a place of safety, upon which the enemy cannot intrench?

Answer. There is a state of such union with the life, as the enemy cannot come between; where there is lying down and rising up in the power of the life, and no beast of prey can make afraid any more; nor can any root of bitterness spring up from within, to trouble or make any disturbance between the life and the soul any more.

## **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **CONDUCTING TOWARDS THE FURTHER MANIFESTATION AND OPENING OF THE PATH OF REDEMPTION AND ETERNAL LIFE TO THE EYE OF SPIRITUALISRAEL.**

Question. How does the Son of God, or Eternal Word, in whom is the light of life, redeem man out of the fallen estate, out of the kingdom of darkness and death, into the kingdom of everlasting righteousness and peace in the life?

Answer. Three ways. First, By wounding him in the natural and corrupt estate, and so breaking his peace and pleasure in the kingdom of darkness, and making him weary thereof. Secondly, By weakening him under the teachings and chastisement of the law. Thirdly, By healing and binding him

up with the oil of salvation, in the power of the endless life, which is the gospel.

Question. How does God wound him in the natural and corrupt state?

Answer. By pursuing him with his light, which lets him see what it is, discovering the evil and danger of it, and so weaning his heart from it, and making him look out after, and long for, a redeemer. Oh! how burdensome is the captivity to the awakened soul, when he has a glimpse of what man was before his fall, when he had a place and being in the life, with a spirit suitable to the life, and what he is now in his estate of estrangedness and alienation from the life; and where he is going in his paths of unrighteousness, estrangedness and alienation! And while his heart is thus returning from the land of death and captivity, and longing after the redeeming power and virtue of the life, the enemy – the power of darkness – lays loads upon him, drawing him more and more under the chains and bonds of iniquity to the utmost of its strength. So that now lusts abound, evils increase, temptations and snares multiply; and in the land of captivity their strength is great, the soul weak and faint, and the redeeming power and virtue seem very far off. Now this is the estate of conversion; when the Lord, in the midst of the power of death and darkness, turns the heart from them towards himself, causing it to wait (under the captivity) for the appearance of the arm of his strength, to break the yoke of the oppressor from off the necks of the oppressed, and so to bring out of the land of death and darkness, into the travels towards the land of promise; where the peace, the life, the liberty in the Lord, the rest, the joy, the full content and happiness is reaped by the soul which follows the Lamb there.

Question. How does God weaken the creature under the teachings and chastisements of the law?

Answer. By exercising him towards good and evil, and correcting him for his unbelief and disobedience, as he finds good, just, and necessary for him.

Question. How does God exercise him towards good and evil, and correct him?

Answer. When he has brought him from under the power of darkness in some measure; and in some measure set the spirit free therefrom, by the virtue of his life springing up in the heart, then he exercises the heart and conduct towards the good and from the evil; then he gives out laws for or against things, according as he finds most proper to the estate of every particular soul. Now upon the giving forth of the law (the life being in some measure raised), there is that which loves its teachings and pure path, and there is that also which draws back from it; and that being yet strong, there come many strokes and chastisements from the Lord, upon his own dear child. And these are bitter; and to be forced into the sin which it loathes, and in heart is turned from; and to be kept from the good which it longs after, and in heart is united to (partly by the strength of the enemy, and partly by reason of its own weakness and negligence), this is bitter also; insomuch as it cries out day after day, and finds this administration of the law almost as heavy a yoke as the land of captivity itself was, because of the weakness of it through the flesh, and the strength and advantages which the corruption of the heart and prince of darkness gather thereby.

Question. What is the benefit of these exercises upon the soul?

Answer. They melt, they break, they make the heart tender and fit to be moulded by the eternal virtue



and power, into a vessel for the power.

Question. What frames of spirit do they work the heart or mind into?

Answer. Into very many precious ones. As for instance,

First, *They make the spirit poor*. The daily inroads of sin and corruption dashing against the holy and righteous law of life, the overbearing the strong desires after purity, and forcing into the defilement, hindering the soul from doing what it loves, and making it do what it hates and would not, this makes it become poorer and poorer, and more afflicted day by day. Upon some visitations of the pure life, and some fresh virtue received, oh, how strong does the soul seem! but when it suddenly forfeits its mercies, loses its freshness, and is plunged deeper in the pit than before, how poor and weak does it then feel itself, trembling at the next openings of the life, and springings up of the virtue thereof in it, not knowing what weakness, captivity, entanglements, and misery from the snares of death remain to follow!

Secondly, *They bring into a mourning estate*. They fill the eyes with tears, and the heart with sorrow; yes, they cause an entrance into *the house of mourning*. To be accustomed to wounds, bruises, snares, grieving of the Spirit, provoking of the deliverer, furthering and giving advantages to the enemy, etc., the sense of this overwhelms the heart with grief, and causes continual sorrow and lamentation to that which is upright towards God.

Thirdly, *They bring into a meek, merciful, tender-hearted frame towards others*. He that is tempted, he that often falls, and is so often wounded and made miserable, he pities those that err; he mourns over the miserable. His heart is broken with the sins and afflictions of others, and he knows not how to be hard towards them, feeling such continual need of abundant mercy himself. It is the rich man, the sound man in religion, that is rough and hard; but he that is once thoroughly melted in the furnace, and made up again, is made but tender, and retains the impression of the meekness, love, and mercy forever. Now a broken estate in religion, or a state of waiting for the life, is much more precious than that which is rich and full by what it had formerly received, and still holds out of the immediate feeling and fresh virtue of the life.

Fourthly, *They bring into a hungry and thirsty state after holiness and righteousness*. Oh, how the soul that is sensible of its filth longs to be washed! How it pants after the pastures of life, the food of life, the living waters? to appear before and enjoy God, in the land of the living! Oh, how does the heart, that is daily afflicted with its unbelief and disobedience, long for the faith that stands in the power, and the obedience that flows from the power! "Oh, teach me your statutes; show me the pure path of obedience in the way of life; guide my feet in the way everlasting! Oh, write your fear in my heart, that I may not depart from you; create a clean heart in me, and put your Spirit within me to be my strength! Oh, continue your loving-kindness to them that know you, and your righteousness to the upright in heart!" Oh, what unutterable breathings daily issue out from the broken spirit, towards the spring of its life!

Fifthly, *They bring into a pure frame*, into a cleanness of inside. "Cleanse first the inside of the cup and platter," said Christ to the Pharisees; and he does so in his disciples. "With the mind I serve the

law of God," said Paul, when he cried out, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver?" It is not conceivable what purity of heart is formed by God in his Israel, by the fire which he kindles in his Zion, and by the furnace which he sets up in his Jerusalem; for though in the furnace the dross still appears, the sight whereof is apt to grieve and afflict the precious heart, yet the melting and purifying sweetly go on, and the soul (which abides the heat) is effectually cleansed thereby, as is very manifest afterwards, when righteousness springs up, with the quiet fruit thereof; but this cannot be discerned, while the flames are discovering and taking hold of the unrighteousness.

Sixthly, *They bring into a patient frame*; fit to bear reproaches and persecutions from the world, who, in the midst of all this weakness, misery, and distress, lay loads upon the poor soul, persecuting him whom God has smitten, and speaking to the grief of him whom God has wounded. God smites for lack of obedience; for too much propensity to please the world; for not coming soon enough out of their customs, vanities, earthly ways and worships; and so soon as the heart and life are given up in obedience to the Lord, the world is discontent, and they smite and persecute because of the obedience. Now the more the spirit is broken by the hand of the Lord, and taught thereby to fear him; and the less strength it has in itself, to grapple with the persecuting spirit of the world; the fitter it is to stand in God's counsel, to wait for his strength and preservation, which is able to bear up its head above all the rage and swelling of the waters of the worldly spirit in the men of this world.

Much more might be said, but this may suffice. What is behind will be felt inwardly, as the soul waits on God in the leadings of his Spirit, through the teachings, chastisements, and distresses of the law.

Question. With what kind of things does the Lord exercise the spirits of his Israel, to bring their hearts into these and such other like precious frames?

Answer. With several sorts and kinds of things, both outward and inward; as,

First, With oppositions, reproaches, and interruptions from the earthly part, both in the men of this world, and in themselves. There is abundance within, and abundance without, to resist, disdain, and interrupt the work of God in the heart, to oppose and withstand that which he has begotten there; his leadings of it, and its obedience to him.

Secondly, With temptations from the enemy, even of many kinds, natures, and degrees, according to the present temper and condition of the soul; as either to doubt, and so despair; or be confident in the flesh from knowledge received, out of the pure fear and fresh feeling of the life; so again, either to halt or draw back, or to be over-hasty and forward; so likewise, either not to obey and act for God, or to act in that will and wisdom which is against God. Now these, with such like, are very numerous, frequent, and sometimes very violent and impetuous.

Thirdly, By withdrawals of the life and sweet presence of God from the soul. These are very frequent from the Lord towards his people, insomuch as he is called by this title; "The God that hides his face from the house of Jacob." Isa. 8:17. chap. 45:15.

Fourthly, By buffetings and prevailings of the enemy. When the Spirit is grieved, the life wounded, and withdraws inward, the enemy often gets ground, giving wounds and causing bruises to the soul; not

only tempting, but finding entrance, and taking in the snare the bird which once escaped, and was delivered.

Fifthly, By doubts, fears, and confused reasonings concerning the voice of God and the voice of the enemy. In the hour of darkness (when the Lord sees good to let forth the power thereof, and to withdraw the beams of his light), how can that be clearly distinguished, which alone is known and seen in the light? How can the motions, drawings, and pure, low workings of the life, be discerned from the false images and transformings of the enemy? Oh, the misery and anguish of the poor soul in this condition! how is the poor, upright heart pained between faith and unbelief, obedience and disobedience, etc., not knowing when it is drawn forward or backward, or by whom.

Question. When do these exercises begin? and how long do they continue?

Answer. The Lord does begin to exercise the soul even in Egypt; for after the promise (of deliverance from spiritual Pharaoh) the bonds increase, the yoke grows more heavy, Pharaoh grows more violent and furious, the captivity increases much; but there is no sight of redemption at all, save to that eye which is weak, and easily overborne in Israel. But the exercises are much more full and sharp in the wilderness, where Israel is led about, tried, afflicted, consumed day by day, as if he should never come to the holy land, nor any of Israel be left to enter therein. Yes, in Canaan, in the rich possession, in the plenteous overflowings of the life, there is still something left to try Israel, and bring him low with, if at any time he be exalted with the glory and fulness of his own estate, and begin to forget his God.

Question. Why does God thus exercise his Israel? Why does he lead them in such a knotty, and not in a more easy and ready way to the everlasting possession, and to the fulness thereof?

Answer. Because their estate and condition require it. They could not be so purified and fitted for the life; their vessels would not be so enlarged to receive it in, nor they so safely enjoy it, were it not for this course of wisdom, wherein God exercises and tries every cranny of their spirits, until he has perfected them, and stopped up the entrance of death everywhere.

Question. How do these exercises purify and enlarge them?

Answer. First, They try the strength and virtue of the life in them, and discover to them their further lack thereof. In the time of the soul's prosperity there seems to be enough; but the day of distress makes manifest the estate and condition as it is. Then the faith, the love, the patience, the meekness, the constancy, and chasteness to the spouse (loving him, and cleaving to him, above all, and in all) many times are found to be less than they were judged to be.

Secondly, It brings to a waiting on God for support, and for receiving of more from him. Then the life breathes vigorously, and the soul hankers after, cleaves to, and sees its need both of the presence and increase of the virtue of the life. Then he that was rich becomes poor, and he that was full becomes empty and nothing; yes, he that had enough to live on and to spare, is now pressed with hunger, lack, and penury.

Thirdly, It prepares for a clearer entrance into, and safer enjoyment of, the fulness; As the soul is more

emptied of the strength and riches it received from God; so it is more prepared to enter into, and live in, the Pure Being itself. For nothing can live there which veils. In the life God was, and is, and is to be all in all forever. That, therefore, which enters there, and lives and abides there, must be poor, empty, naked, nothing, and remain nothing forever. As it gathers any thing from the fulness, and becomes any thing in itself, thereby it is shut out.

Question. How does God heal and bind up that which he has wounded and broken to pieces with his various and frequent exercises?

Answer. By opening the power of the endless life, in the vessel which he has thoroughly purified and prepared, and filling it with the power. The free power of life, that is the gospel. To the meek, to the broken-hearted, to the cleansed it is prophesied; and when the work of cleansing is finished, the wound made wide enough, and kept open long enough, and the death to the first husband fully accomplished, then the perfect oil is perfectly poured in, and everlasting health and salvation obtained. This is the end which God aims at in the visitations and leadings of his seed; happy are they that pass through the vale of misery, and drink off the dregs of the "cup of trembling," not fainting nor sitting down by the way, but following the faithful Shepherd and Leader of Israel, till they arrive here.

Question. What is the great danger in the path of life?

Answer. The great danger is of ascending a step higher than the present estate and condition will bear; for by this means the aspiring mind gets up, and is exalted, and holds something received from the life, out of the pure fear which preserves the heart clean, and out of the sensible feeling which keeps fresh and living to God. And then the simplicity is betrayed, and a wrong spirit lives, and a wrong eye is opened; so that there is nothing now but whoredom from the life, and the heart exalted and conceited in the way of its whoredoms, as if it were the pure bed and most excellent way of enjoyment of the life.

Question. What way is there of preservation herefrom?

Answer. Watching to the life, keeping low in the fear, and close to the feeling. Here the aspirer is shut out, or soon espied at his beginning to enter, and then the living cross received, which crucifies and drives him back. And indeed there is no way of safety in the travels towards the enjoyment of life, or under any enjoyment before the state of perfect death, but under the cross to that spirit and nature which would dwell there, and please itself therewith, and be something therein, and so forget the pure everlasting spring, adulterating with the streamings forth of it.

Man was made for God to be a vessel of his pleasure, to receive his content, enjoyment, and happiness by reflection. So that man's proper work was to watch to the spring from which he came; to be disposed of, ordered, and to be according to his pleasure. This was natural to man before his fall, till a corrupt spirit by deceit entered him, and corrupted him. And while any thing of that corrupt spirit or fallen nature remains, he is apt to aspire in the self-hood, and to seek the enjoyment of what comes from the fountain (yes, and the fountain itself also) in and according to the will and wisdom of the self-hood. And here let man receive what gifts soever from God, be advanced to ever so high a habitation in the land of life, yes, have the very fountain itself given him; yet by this means he will corrupt, lose the gift or spring, be separated from it, and adulterate with what he can still retain or gather in his own

principle. And here do deep travelers lose their way, falling from their portion in the land of life, and from their enjoyments in the paradise of the pleasure of the life, into the earthly and sensual spirit, holding things wisely and richly there in the earthly principle, not knowing the remove of their habitation there, nor thinking that they are there.

He that reads these things, let him not strive to comprehend them; but be content with what he feels thereof suitable to his own present estate: and as the life grows in him, and he in the life, and he comes to meet with the things and exercises spoken of, the words and experiences concerning them will of themselves open to him, and be useful and serviceable to him so far as the Lord pleases, he keeping to the leadings, savor, and principle of life in himself, wherein alone his knowledge, sight, growth, and experiences are safe.

Now he that would travel safely in spirit unto the land of life, let him wait to have these things following written by the finger of God in his heart, and the sense and impression thereof preserved fresh in him.

First, It is the free grace of God which begins the work of redemption, which causes the light to shine, which works the repentance or turning from the dead state, and also the belief in, and turning towards, the living God.

Secondly, It is the same grace alone that can preserve and cause the plant of grace to grow. If there be a withdrawing of the light, a withholding of the free influence, that which depends thereupon cannot retain its freshness; which the Lord may do as often as he pleases, for the chastisement of the rebellious part, or for the trial of his pure life and virtue in his plants.

Thirdly, The grace of God visiting the soul in the death, in the darkness, in the fallen estate, begets life anew in it, makes it in some measure light in the Lord, opens an eye in it to see the things of God, an ear to hear and distinguish between the sound of life and of death, a heart to turn from and refuse the vanity, and to turn towards and abide in the living substance.

Fourthly, The Spirit of God carries on the work of redemption, by drawing, leading, and acting the quickened soul: by exercising that which he has begotten in the life, under the law of the life. Thus the life draws the soul daily nearer and nearer towards the everlasting spring, and from the fading emptiness of sin, vanity, and the creaturehood; and the soul, by the enlivening virtue, daily follows on after the life, in the leadings, spirit, and power thereof. There is a living soul begotten by the virtue of the grace, and the living soul daily lives in the grace, and travels in the virtue thereof from the unbelief to the faith, from the enmity to the love, from the perverseness to the straitness, from the iniquity to the righteousness, even from all the territories of the darkness, and also from the weak measures and degrees of the grace and life towards the fulness itself, even until it perfectly center in, and be fully filled therewith.

Fifthly, Where there is a stopping of the virtue received from the grace, and not an answer in the heart, there the work of redemption is stopped. If the soul follow not in the drawing, the drawing is lost, as to it. If the ear open not to hear the voice of the Word, or if it be not mixed with faith in the heart hearing, it proves ineffectual. If strength issue forth from the Lord, yet if the soul receive not the strength which

issues forth and bubbles up in it, or answer it not in giving up to it, and traveling on, the soul abides where it was at least, if it also retire not backward from that estate and condition whereto the life had advanced it: for if the virtue of the life and grace be refused, there is an advantage given to death to re-enter, and gain ground by its contrary virtue and power.

Sixthly, Mark therefore diligently how the Lord does carry on the dispensation of his love and free grace, even as if there were much done by the strength and diligence of the creature. What wounding of itself by repentance! what striving to believe! what wrestling against enemies, and for the influences of the grace, and to keep the hope up, and the distrust out! What strict watching and waiting, even as if the creature did work out its whole salvation!

Seventhly, Though the creature seems to do much itself (having received life from the grace, and acting abundantly towards God in the grace), yet it is the grace and virtue which comes from the Creator (who is also the Redeemer) which indeed does all: for though the creature repent really, and turn from the darkness with its whole heart, yet the repentance is of the virtue which flows from the grace, and not of the creature which receives the grace: and so likewise in the faith, the love, the obedience, the meekness, the patience, the watching, the waiting, the hoping, etc. Yes, the very receiving the grace is not of the creature, but of the grace: for the creature is dead until it be visited by the grace: and by the visitation of the grace alone is made alive, and able to receive it.

Behold then the *mystery of redemption*. God is all in redemption; God does all therein as fully as in creation (it is a new creation) even the whole work thereof; yet the creature quickened and renewed is in unity with him in his operations. Phil. 2:12,13. He whose eyes are opened can read the mystery, and in true understanding say (if he has been led, and has proceeded so far), "I am able to do all things through Christ that strengthens me; yet not I, but the grace of God in me." Now to bring the creature to this, the Lord exercises it daily in obedience unto him, in the life and virtue which flows forth from him, causing it to feel its weakness as it forgets the virtue, or aspires to live of itself on the virtue received, out of the sensible feeling of its dependence upon the spring. And indeed the virtue that comes from God can alone answer God, and the creature is only accepted with the Spring and Father of life, as it is found therein.

Question. But if the work of redemption be wrought by God's creating power, how comes it to meet with so many rubs and interruptions, and sometimes overturnings? Can any thing stop God's creating power?

Answer. So far as God absolutely pleases to create, nothing can stop or hinder; but the entrance of that which he begins to create into the creature, and its getting a being there, as also the growth and preservation of it there, may be hindered by the force of spiritual enemies, if the Lord pleases to permit; or by the grieving and provoking of that free power, which alone begets and preserves life in the heart.

Objection. Then the work of redemption is not carried on by an absolute, free-creating power.

Answer. The creating power and preserving power is the same; but the work is something different, both in the outward, visible creation, and inward, new creation. The preservation of that which is

created and planted (unto its growth and perfection) is by the same power which created and planted; but rather in a way of care, industry, art, and skill, than of such immediate force and power, though by the exercise and putting forth of the same virtue and power.

There are three things in redemption:

First, There is the issuing out of the free grace, love, virtue, and divine power towards the creature.

Secondly, There is the opening of the estate of the creature thereby, convincing and drawing it out of the alienation from the life, towards unity with the life.

Thirdly, There is the following of the creature after the life, in the quickening virtue of the drawings, through all the snares, temptations, diversions and oppositions of the enemy.

Now there is no hindering of the issuing forth of the free grace towards the creature, or of those convictions and inclinations of the creature to follow, which necessarily ensue thereupon. But the pursuit and progress of the creature (or its abiding with the quickening virtue and power) may many ways be interrupted and diverted, and so the creature drawn from under the influence of the free covenant; for though the covenant be free, yet the creature only partakes of it, as it is drawn into it, and preserved in it.

Therefore let those fear who feel the power and redeeming virtue, and know, that notwithstanding the free and certain promise to the seed, yet the creature is as clay in the hands of the potter, which may be made a vessel of honor or dishonor, as he pleases to favor it, or take occasion against it. And whoever would pass through the work of salvation and redemption, unto the salvation and redemption itself, in the living virtue received from the life, let him keep fast hold on the good pleasure, and in it give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, working out his salvation with fear and trembling, because God works in him both to will and to do of his good-will. And walking diligently and industriously in this path, he may attain the seal of the redemption, even that mark which can never be worn out, and to full assurance of faith in the redeeming power; though it is also possible for him afterwards, through much negligence and grieving of the Spirit whereby he was sealed, to lose the sight of the mark, and the comfort of the assurance, which was once fresh and clear in his spirit.

For a close at this time, I shall add a few words concerning the unity of God's grace (or free light of his spirit) notwithstanding the various estates and conditions of man whom it visits, and the variety of its operations.

**THERE IS A THREE-FOLD STATE OF MAN,  
WHEREIN THE GRACE OF GOD VISITS HIM.**

First, The gentile state, or state of nature.

Secondly, The Jew state, or administration of the law, wherein God takes him under his own tuition,

making known his will to him, and requiring obedience of him: and not only so, but also directs him to the inward teacher, and to the principle of the pure fear, which is the place of wisdom's teaching and instructions.

Thirdly, The gospel-state, or state of faith, where the principle is raised, the seed lives, and that is felt springing up, known, and enjoyed, which does the will, and receives the promise.

Now in all these, the law, the light, the life, the wisdom, the power, are one and the same; but the administrations are different.

In the Gentile state, or state of nature, the light which man receives there (to discover evil, and work him into good) is of the Spirit, and by virtue of the promise. For he had been everlastingly shut up in the darkness, had it not been for the promise; and it is for the promise's sake, and from the free-grace, that he has any visitation in the state of nature, and any desires after, or leadings towards, the good, and from the evil; which spring not, nor can spring, from corrupted nature; but from the free fountain of the new life.

In the law-state, the light grows more clear; the teacher is there discerned and acknowledged; his drawings, warnings, instructions, and reproofs felt more distinctly, and the soul (that is watchful) continually exercised therein.

In the gospel-state, the principle of life is raised, the promised seed come, the power which does the will received, and the light of life entering into, and possessing the vessel.

Now this is the whole of man, to wait on the ministration of the life to him in his present estate, whether he be yet in the estate of nature, or under the law, or under grace. To know from where his redemption springs, and to wait on the redeeming arm for the beginnings, progress, and perfecting of it; and if it be in the feeling of that virtue, it is enough; or if it be kept longing or panting after it, it is well; yes, if there be but a desire in him after a thirst, there is hope; no, if there be but the least feeling of his dead, barren, and senseless estate, there is some life in him, which the Lord loves, and will find a time to express his bowels towards: yes, that which is wholly in the darkness, and shut up in the pit, the Lord has bowels in him towards, and after many days may please to visit. Oh, the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the riches of the mercy and love of God! Who knows his yearning towards souls, and his ways of visiting and redeeming! O my soul! hope you in the Lord for evermore, and leave not breathing towards him, till you and his whole creation be filled and satisfied with him, and then fetch the full breath of life in him forever.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

I HAVE been treating of the inward work, as it is wrought in the heart by the power, and brought to the sensible, experimental knowledge of the creature; yet would not be so understood as if I made void what was done without by Christ in his own person, or any of those ends and purposes for which it was wrought, and appointed so to be done by the Father: though this I know, that the knowledge of those things, with the belief therein, or any practices and observations therefrom, without the life, can no more profit now, than the Jews' literal knowledge of the law could profit them, when they were



rejected therewith. And since the apostasy, of this latter age especially, I have clearly seen in the Spirit of the Lord, that the professors' knowledge of the letter of the gospel, and cleaving to their apprehensions which they gather therefrom, is become a snare and trap to them, to keep them from feeling the power, and living in the sensibility of the virtue of the grace; even as the Jews' table (or gathered knowledge from Moses and the prophets) became their snare and trap. The Lord open their eyes in his due time to discern it, that they may not withstand that ministration and revelation of his everlasting gospel, which God sees good to visit the apostatized world with, after this long, dark night of apostasy! whereof those that stick in forms, or knowledge of things in the letter, without the power, cannot but prove the greatest enemies, opposers, and persecutors.

Now to help them a little, if the Lord please; in the rolling of my bowels towards them I find my heart opened, to lay a few things before them.

First, With my heart, in the sight of the Lord, do I own that principle which formerly wrought in some of them, which I myself was wrought upon by, and knew not only the outward knowledge which they were acquainted with, but also the inward work: and I also knew what I called the light of nature, and what I called the light of the Spirit, the one whereof was not the other, but differed as far as Spirit and flesh.

Secondly, I also own all the openings and refreshments which they received from the Lord in reading of the Scriptures in their public or private exercises, and the experiences which they had from God in their own hearts: and I know that these things in themselves were true in their proportion; however the present sense, and holding of them out of that wherein they received them, may justly be judged by the Spirit of the Lord in his servants.

Thirdly, Though those things were true in their day, and in their proportion and measure; yet in them they might lose their virtue, and die, and so they not retain the thing in its life, in its own principle, in the newness of the Spirit, in that birth to which God gave it; but only an image of it in the natural understanding, in the earthly part, in the dead principle; and then their knowledge of God and their experiences cannot but be corrupted, and now become the possession of death, and the engines of death in their hearts. Again, God had something further to manifest, even to bring forth that which they earnestly prayed for in that day; which they, having abode in that virtue wherein they prayed, might easily have discerned and embraced; but being out of that, and pleasing themselves with the literal knowledge of the things they then received, holding them in the wise and earthly part, that part cannot but stumble at the low and contemptible appearances of God, which are still offensive to that part. The great glory of God is hid in a little seed; and how can the great eye of the fleshly-wise see it? We have Moses and the prophets (said the Jews after the flesh), but as for this man, we know not where he is from. Even so it is now: we know the relation which the Scriptures have given of Christ by the apostles, we are sure this is of God, say the professors; but as for this little seed of the kingdom, or light of God in the heart, we cannot believe that all we lack is to spring up in it.

Now, Fourthly, there is a necessity both of the knowledge of persons to pass away, and also of their experiences to be given up, and let fall, in these two cases following:

First, When the virtue is withdrawn from them, when death has caught them, when they become

death's goods: for that which is received from the life is only profitable to the soul in the virtue of the life. When the earthly part has caught them, and seated itself there, they then become the strong-holds of the enemy, and the engines of death to the heart; so that then life and true relief are not to be had in them, but where the eternal virtue pleases next to appear.

Secondly, When God has something to bring forth further in the world, or in any particular heart, to make way for it he brings death upon that which was before living. Thus when God is pleased to *bring forth a greater measure of faith, and power of his Spirit*, he distresses the heart, making the foregoing faith and power appear weak, and pass away; and many times for a season shuts up the soul in the unbelief, until the fresh faith and fresh power spring up and arise. And this causes the necessity of the further dispensations of his eternal virtue to appear, and the beauty of them to shine; which they would not have done so abundantly, had it not been for the foregoing distress of the heart.

There are yet some things further weighty upon my heart to lay before them, needful for them to consider of, which may be serviceable and helpful to them in their present condition, if the Lord please to open their hearts, and impress them thereon. 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 mind of the words which the Spirit spake, but as the same Spirit which spake 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; but 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, further than it bows, is limited, and subjected.

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 be still in it, or whether death has caught it; whether it be the manna fit for the soul's food, or manna once given, but now corrupted. O! 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 had fed on, the earthly birth would be catching at, laying hold of, and treasuring up to feed on at another time. Likewise in my reading of the Scriptures, I lay open to this great snare, of reading in my own will, and gathering from there in mine own understanding, and so 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, but that which the breasts give out; that is it which has the immediate life, virtue, and true nourishment in it. And this must be returned back into the 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 have I often known, that when I have been in great distress, I have received fresh comfort from the Lord; but running to that afterwards, it never was able to comfort me, but more deeply wounded me. And thus has the Lord been teaching me to live upon himself, and not upon any thing received from him, but upon the life itself, the mercy, the good pleasure, which proportions out the living bread daily to the living birth.

Fourthly, It is easy receiving of knowledge in the earthly part, in the earthly wisdom, out of 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 therein. Also it is easy retaining of 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, even for the freshness of his Spirit in your spirits; 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, having the watch set 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, get, and hold a vast knowledge of the things of the kingdom in the earthly treasury. Thus 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 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 that might be raised in you by the power, which is to inherit the life eternal; and 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; as lost, as undone, as miserable as any. What knowledge, what life, what precious virtue I then received, was from God's grace; which was still his own, and he might call for it at his pleasure. And surely, he which 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 with the fountain, and lie open to what follows? Yet this did the Lord require of me; and my heart being not willing to part with my life, but striving to retain it, and grow in the first way of the dispensation of the grace unto perfection, he brake it after an unutterable manner, and brought such misery and desolation upon me as I could not possibly have suspected, having been sealed by him. 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 nothing in me can be satisfied with him, but 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 have nothing at my own disposal. And when I catch at any thing, or would be any thing, I lose the spring, and am corrected for my backsliding and adultery of spirit, but am still again visited with fresh love, and the springings 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 exceeding rich, the treasure of life unutterable; and he that will possess it, must sell all for it: even all his lusts

and corruptions; yes, all the riches of his nature (the best of his will, the best of his wisdom most refined); no not only so, but all the riches of his spirit, all that he has held, or can hold out 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, but what is formed, grows up in, and is preserved in the life, according to its own mere will and good pleasure; then alone is he fit to be comprehended and brought forth in the eternal spring. Perfectly happy is he who is perfectly possessed thereof; yet he is not without a proportion of blessedness also, who is mourning after it and traveling towards it; which 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; till 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; which the Lord lays before all to run after, but none but the spiritual seed (begotten of and abiding in the Spirit) can obtain. 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 the own will, and to enlarge the own wisdom thereby, and so to become something again in itself), forgetting the spring.

As the creature retains any thing in the natural part, out of the immediate feeling of the living virtue, it corrupts, it adulterates from the living spring.

And that which any one has thus adulterated with, 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.

# **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHOWING MAN HIS DUTY**

## **AND POINTING**

### **HIM TO THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD IN HIS HEART**

#### **WHICH IS**

**THE ROOT OF LIFE IN ALL ITS DISPENSATIONS, AND WHICH, BEING KEPT TO, IS  
ABLE TO BEAR THE FRUIT OF LIFE IN EVERY DISPENSATION**

#### **AS ALSO**

#### **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

#### **CONCERNING**

#### **THE SEED OF JACOB AND THE TRUE CHURCH**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON THE YOUNGER**

**[1662]**

#### **PREFACE**

THE goodness of God endures forever. And though his creature man (who should have been subject and obedient to him) has sinned against him, and by motions and inclinations of his own will and wisdom (out of the principle of his pure life, which was to have been his guide and governor) has fallen short of his glory; yet he still pleases to visit his poor lost creature with loving-kindness and mercy, and with various dispensations of his life, according to his pleasure. What man is there that has not received a soul from the breath of the Almighty? And what soul is it that has not some visitations of life from that living breath? The bowels of eternity most naturally roll towards all its offspring; who seeks the gathering of them all in the variety, and according to the limitations of his will, in his pure wisdom.

There is a current or stream of life before the promise is known, which secretly visits all, discovering the darkness in some measure unto all, and drawing from it. And happy is he who falls in with, and follows the leadings of the Almighty here; for then he cannot abide in the darkness, but still (according to the need of his condition) will meet with a true guide out of it, and with the true power which redeems and delivers from it. For as the promise made to Adam, had relation to all his posterity; so whoever is visited with any light by virtue of the promise, that light will lead him to the promise, and

he (in the obedience thereof) will meet with the sweetness and virtue of the promise. So that the lowest dispensation of God (the creature being exercised therein, feeling the lack of God's power, and drawn to depend upon him for mercy and strength) will lead fallen man back again to his Maker, by the virtue which flows into man from the promise, though ever so secretly and hiddenly. For it is not the distinct knowledge of the promise, (though that is a very great advantage) but the virtue flowing from the promise, which saves. Man being touched by that virtue, and by the touch thereof quickened towards God; and in that virtue which comes from the redeeming mercy, cleaving to his Maker, and hoping in his tender bowels, and feeling the weakness, insufficiency, and corruption of his own will and understanding, and so going forth from himself towards the spring which quickened him. Here is Christ known in spirit, received in spirit, believed and relied on in spirit, and his living virtue already felt, and further waited for. And can this man, thus walking, thus believing, thus obeying, thus cleaving to the principle which gives life, thus receiving virtue from it, and growing up (in that virtue) out of the self-hood, into it; I say, can this man miss of eternal life, which runs along in all the streamings forth of this living virtue?

But oh, how sweet is the stream of life in the sensible manifestation of the promise! He who feels the covenant in Christ, and life streaming into his heart through the covenant, and the seal of eternal peace to his soul, and that he shall never be left nor forsaken by the fountain of mercy, but all that ever befalls him shall conduce towards the working out of the perfect redemption and salvation of his soul; this is a precious state indeed; and this is the state which the feeling of the faith, and the living obedience in the Spirit leads to. Happy are they that walk in the path thereof, who content not themselves with man's knowledge of Christ, with man's belief of the things written concerning him, with man's obedience to the precepts left on record by the apostles, but whose living soul cannot be satisfied without the feeling and pressing after Christ, the life, and without a true engrafting into him in spirit, through the living Word, or testimony of life, received into, and believed on in the heart.

And how sweet also is the ministration of the law, which comes from the promise, and is managed to the soul by the hand of the Mediator! How sweet is it to see the creature fall daily! to find one's own strength to believe, to obey, to suffer, to abide with Christ, to wait on Christ, to hope for Christ, daily battered and brought to nothing, and no life left but what issues from the spring, and is alone maintained by the free current thereof into the heart daily! Here the stroke of the law is received by degrees unto perfect death. Here are the openings of the pure prophecies in the Spirit concerning a new kingdom, a new birth, a new heir, a new life. Here is the axe laid to the root of the tree, and that cut down in the heart which is not to live, and which hinders the heir from his inheritance. Here is the vale of tears; which tears spring from the life, whose virtue washes away the corruptible day by day. Here is the house of mourning, and that state of darkness entered into, which swallows up all the joy of the dark, earthly spirit, and consumes its nature. Here the light of life is sown, and through these exercises it springs up; and after the passing away of this ministration, breaks forth in strength upon that soul which has been thoroughly exercised herein.

I desire the good of all mankind, waiting for the swallowing up of the dispensations of death, and the breaking forth of life upon them in the seasons thereof, according to the good pleasure of him whose gift life is, and whose are all the dispensations of it. And in that love, through the openings and drawings of life in me, have I writ what follows; not to upbraid or strike at any but to be a help unto such as the Lord shall please to make it serviceable to. Wait on the Lord, eye him, read in fear, praying

to be touched by, and gathered into, that which gives the feeling of the weight of truth. Oh, that men's souls were awakened, that they might know what it is to perish from God, and what to be saved by him! The proper portion of man's soul is the fountain of eternal life; and he can never be happy (nor in true rest, peace, or joy) while separated from it. Let him who is not brutish in understanding, and whose soul is not wholly dead God-wards consider this.

## **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **SHOWING MAN HIS DUTY**

Question. WHAT is the proper work of man here in this world?

Answer. To fear God, and keep his commandments. This is all that God requires of him, and this is enough to make him happy.

Question. What is God?

Answer. The fountain of beings and natures, the inward substance of all that appears; who creates, upholds, consumes, and brings to nothing, as he pleases.

Question. How may I know that there is a God?

Answer. By sinking down into the principle of his own life, wherein he reveals himself to the creature. There the soul receives such tastes and knowledge of him, as cannot be questioned by him that abides there.

Question. What is it to fear this God?

Answer. The spirit and soul of the creature standing in awe of his nature, and waiting to be kept in due subjection thereto; this is to fear him, and this is the proper means of preserving the spirit of the creature right in its motion towards him, attendance upon him, and expectations from him.

Question. What are his commandments?

Answer. They are such as are either general to all mankind, common to some sorts of men, or proper to particular persons.

Question. What are those which are general to all mankind?

Answer. They are very many; but may all be referred to these two heads; namely, *To love God above all, and one's neighbor as one's self*; even so in every respect doing to him, as one would be done to by him in the like case.

Question. How may man perform these?

Answer. Only by receiving a principle of life from God, and keeping close thereto.

Question. How may a man come by a principle 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; which, man's spirit opening unto, and drinking in, it becomes a seed or principle of life in him, overspreading and leavening him up to eternal life.

Question. What hinders man from receiving this principle of life, and from keeping close thereto?

Answer. A fleshly principle, which is contrary to the knowledge, fear, and obedience of the Lord, and to all that springs from the principle and power of his life.

Question. How comes this fleshly principle 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 has man against this fleshly principle?

Answer. None of himself; but being freely touched by the other principle, 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 the corrupt desires, reasonings, and imaginations thereof.

Question. In what way is this effected upon the heart?

Answer. In the heart's belief of this principle, and in its obedience thereto.

Question. How may a man come to believe in this principle?

Answer. In feeling its nature, in waiting to feel 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 in the living sense, which its presence and appearance begets in the soul.

Question. How may a man come to obey this principle?

Answer. In the faith, in the eying of it, in the clinging to it, the strength issues from it into the creature, which makes it able to perform all that it calls for.

Question. How come persons to be so weak, and to complain so much for lack of power, who feel a true beginning of life, and earnest breathings after God?



Answer. From the enemy's interposing of reasonings between them and their faith. The darkness, the principle of unbelief, lies near, and is still raising mud (as much as possible) between the principle of life and the soul: and so far as it can come between, it disturbs both the motions of the soul towards its spring or principle of life, and also the spring's clear bubbling up in, and running through the soul.

Question. What is to be done in this case?

Answer. The soul is to wait God's seasons of deliverance from these, and to hope for a hidden support from his grace, while the visitations and leadings of his life are not made manifest.

Question. What ground is there for this hope?

Answer. There is ground of hope for the creature in God's goodness; who naturally loves and seeks after the souls which he has made, and does not readily nor easily cast off in any of his dispensations. Besides, where he has begotten something, and where the bent of the heart is towards him, and the desire after his pure life and spirit above all things kindled, there has he laid the foundation of a building, which, though at present it may lie in the dust, and under heaps of ruins, he cannot forget.

Question. Are there other commands besides these common to all men?

Answer. Yes; according to that dispensation of life and mercy unto which they are called, and into which they are admitted by the love and kindness of God, which overspreads all his works, and who forgets not his creatures in their estate of separation and alienation from him.

Question. Are there then more dispensations of life and mercy than one?

Answer. Yes. For though the life and mercy in itself is but one; yet it has several ways of seeking out after, and gathering into itself, the lost sons of Adam.

Question. What have been the chief ways of dispensing the light of life towards mankind?

Answer. First, By a secret shining into their hearts. Thus the soul of the Lord holds forth some beams of his eternal light to all mankind, according to his pleasure, at some time or other visiting the darkest corners of the earth, and making some way therein for the scattering of that darkness which separates the soul from the light of life, and from the sweet presence and enjoyment of its Creator, which naturally flows into every soul in its believing and obeying of that light.

Question. Were ever any thus gathered to the Lord?

Answer. The Lord is able to make any dispensation of his life effectual. And as many of the Jews were not gathered by the law, so many of the Gentiles might be gathered without the law.

Question. But the law gave the knowledge of the Messiah to come through faith, in whom was the remission of sins known, and strength against sin.

Answer. The knowledge of Christ runs along in all the dispensations of the eternal light: the light

comes from him, and it manifests him in spirit; and the remission by his blood is spiritually known in the soul feeling the living virtue thereof. The law and the gospel are both known in spirit, wherever the eternal light visits, and is received.

Question. What are the commands common to those?

Answer. They are known to those who are thus gathered, who, in the life thus dispensed, feel the leadings of it, and in its light are sensible of those requirings which universally stream forth from it among those that are thus gathered.

Question. What other way of dispensing the light of life has there been?

Answer. That of the promise to the fathers, which was before the law, wherein they saw the day of the Messiah, and were glad. This was a glorious dispensation, in which they tasted the Sonship, and felt power to walk with God, and faith to trust him in his leadings, and were translated by him (in a sweet and precious degree) into the measure of his life, which made them pilgrims and strangers in this world, and steered their spirits towards another country.

Question. What were the commands common to these?

Answer. They were seen by them in the streamings forth of that dispensation of life among them; a taste whereof the quickened spirit may have, in reading the words concerning them up and down the Scriptures.

Question. What further dispensation of life has there been?

Answer. That of the law to the Jews.

Question. Was that a ministration of life? Was it not rather a ministration of death and condemnation?

Answer. It proved so in its effect, through the weakness of their state; but its natural tendency and proper effect, in case of obedience thereto, was life. And also in the midst of its administering death and condemnation, it pointed to him who was the justification and the life; insomuch as the law was kind to them in slaying them, and serviceable to the life of such souls as kindly received the stroke thereof, and fled to the hope set before them.

Question. What were the common laws amongst these?

Answer. They are to be read in the writings of Moses and the prophets, wherein God's law and testimonies were abundantly given forth to that people.

Question. Have there been yet any further dispensations of life?

Answer. Yes; that of the gospel, before the apostasy and falling away from the living truth and power of the Spirit, into man's wisdom, inventions, and imitations.

Question. What were the laws common to these?

Answer. They may be read in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, where the record of this ministration is to be found.

Question. What has the ministration of life been since the apostles' days?

Answer. Very low, very weak, very dark, very hidden, exceedingly retired; yet true children have been begotten, and food has been handed to them from the Father, and they have been nourished up in the faith, and have kept the commandments of their day, and died in the faith: and those who have thus been led and preserved, their souls are at rest, and in the peace of God. But these have not been in any particular, distinct gathering, and clear separation out of the world; but scattered up and down in several mistaken forms, and loaded with the inventions of the earthly wisdom, and with the bondage and weight of corruption, not knowing that clearness of spirit, and victory over sin, by the presence of the life, which was felt and enjoyed by the Christians before the apostasy.

Question. Had these any common commandments?

Answer. Not so distinctly as the former; for they lying in a heap of confusion in a wilderness, or chaos, scattered in the mists and fogs of anti-christian darkness one from another, had not such common beams of light, or clear streams of life running among them, as those that had a more distinct gathering. Yet some testimony for God, and against the corruption of the times, according to what was in their day and age to be testified for and against, did run among every sort (of such as were true-hearted) in some kind or other. And for this they were hated and persecuted by men, (even by such as were formal, and of another spirit) and also dearly tendered and beloved of the Lord.

Question. Has there been any further dispensation of life since the apostasy?

Answer. There is another begun, whose glory is to exceed the former, after the darkness (which overspread and clouded the beauty of the former) is expelled by the growing brightness of this appearance.

Question. How may it appear that there is another?

Answer. There is no knowing this dispensation but by being gathered into the light of it. Wisdom has been alone justified of her children in former ages, and she can be justified by none else, in her appearance in this age.

Question. What is the difference of this from the former?

Answer. It is more inward, more retired, more closely depending upon the principle of life in the spirit, than the former.

Question. Is it then the same in substance?

Answer. Yes, the very same. The very same truth of Christ Jesus, the very same building of God in the

spirit, the very same church is to be again brought forth; but in greater glory, that being now to be left out whereby the enemy then entered; and also degrees of beauty, strength and perfection being to be added.

Question. But surely a greater glory than that in the apostles' days is not to be expected; no, it is not the belief of many that ever that shall be restored.

Answer. This arises from the unbelief, and lack of the sight of the thing by the right eye in the true light. For the travel of the eternal Spirit in its dispensation is towards perfection; and after the darkness of antichrist, the brightness of the light of life is to shine more clear than ever, as is abundantly testified in the Scriptures (especially in the book of the Revelations), and also seen by many in the clear openings of the same eternal Spirit.

Question. Are there any common commands given forth in this dispensation?

Answer. Yes, unto all who are gathered in the Spirit of it. They all feel the same common commands unto several things, according to the nature and drift of this dispensation.

Question. What are they?

Answer. They are many, and concern many things; namely, their meetings to worship and wait on the Lord, who has visited and gathered them; together with their way of worshipping, as also their converse and conduct amongst men, etc., which are not easily specified: neither indeed are they fit to be held forth to man's disputing wisdom; but to be waited for in the Spirit, where the light of them is evident, and the strength to perform them received and held.

Question. But how may men know that these are true commands of the Lord, and not imaginations or opinions of their own?

Answer. When the principle of life is known, and that which God has begotten felt in the heart, the distinction between what God opens and requires there, and what springs up in man's wisdom, reason, and imagination, is very manifest.

Question. Are there particular commands to particular persons besides these?

Answer. As every heart has its own particular state, which is only fully known to the Spirit of the Lord, who is the leader of the soul out of its darkness and captivity, and the exerciser of it in what he judges proper to its present state; so the Lord gives out particular commands as he pleases, either to do or forbear such a thing, as he judges it necessary for the soul.

Question. How may these be known?

Answer. By coming into acquaintance with the Lord, and the movings and voice of his Spirit. First, the quickenings of the Spirit of the Lord are to be received into the heart; then the eye fixed, in that which is quickened, on him that quickened it, and all the inward senses waiting upon him, and exercised towards him. Thus the sheep come to know the voice of the Shepherd, and to follow his leadings into

the pastures of life, and out of the paths and feedings of death, and are drawn on by him towards any thing, or stopped by him from any thing, at his pleasure.

Oh that the sons of men knew their God, and were gathered into any living dispensation by him, wherein they might have the true sense and seeking of him! Oh that men's souls were awakened to feel the lack of the breath of life from which they came! Oh that the seed of Israel were redeemed by their God, that their glory and beauty in his pure life might awaken the nations! O God, hasten your work in the world! bring the glory and wisdom of man into contempt, and bring forth your own glory and wisdom in its pure brightness.

## **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **CONCERNING THE SEED OF ISRAEL, AND THE TRUE CHURCH**

Question. WHO are the seed of Israel?

Answer. They who are begotten of the Spirit and nature of the eternal Father and fountain of life, out of the spirit and nature of this world.

Question. Are there such a seed in the earth?

Answer. Yes, and have always been, who have still been the blessing of this world, though constantly hated and persecuted by it.

Question. Why are they hated by the world?

Answer. Because they are not of the world, but faithful witnesses against it, testifying unto it, that its ways are evil, and its end misery.

Question. Why do they thus testify?

Answer. It is their nature, and God calls them thereunto. He has set up his light in their hearts, to shine forth in the world, and scatter the darkness.

Question. How do they scatter the darkness? Does not the darkness rather scatter them?

Answer. The darkness does indeed often prevail against them outwardly, hunting and scattering them up and down upon the face of the earth; but they still prevail inwardly, in the testimony of men's consciences, over the darkness; who, at one time or other, are generally made to acknowledge in the secrets of their hearts that they are of God.

Question. Why does the Lord allow it to be thus, that that which is precious, and of him, should be trodden under foot by that which is not of him?

Answer. The Lord has his season for the discovery of all things. He has given the kingdom of darkness

its time and power to reign over the just, and to keep the holy seed in bondage and captivity; and he has also appointed his suffering seed its season of suffering in all ages and generations. And by these, and through these, the nature of each is discovered, their ends, and their suitableness to their ends.

Question. But shall this holy seed always suffer in this world?

Answer. No, not so; for the Lord has a day to raise the just into dominion over the unjust, even here in this world.

Question. When shall this be?

Answer. When the malice and persecution of the enemies of the pure seed are filled up, and the measure of its sufferings finished.

Question. Where are this seed?

Answer. They are (as yet, for the generality) scattered up and down under the face of the whole heaven. Not to be found in a visible body gathered together; but scattered up and down, here a few, and there a few; here one, and there another.

Question. Were they then once in a body?

Answer. Yes, they were once embodied: for after God had cast off the natural seed, the Jews, he gathered the spiritual seed, into a body, setting them as a city on a hill, and making them the light of the world.

Question. How came they afterwards to be scattered?

Answer. The dragon has done this, God allowing him many ways to assault this building, and so far at length to prevail over it, as even to scatter his church out of her built-state, into a wilderness-state, where no eye can discern her any more, but that which is of God. (Wait to read Rev. 12. in the light of that Spirit which wrote it.)

Question. Why did God allow the dragon to prevail over so precious and glorious a building?

Answer. Because there was something of the power of darkness necessary to be made manifest, which could not be otherwise so made manifest as by this its prevailing; and also that he might show the necessity of, and make way for the bringing forth of that, over which the power of darkness cannot prevail.

Question. Is there then such a thing to be brought forth?

Answer. Yes, there is a church, there is a spiritual building, against which the gates of hell can never prevail; which is so united to the rock, that the powers of darkness can by no means come between the rock and it.

Question. Are this church and the church in the apostles' days different, or the same?

Answer. This church has been in all ages; but a more full and perfect bringing forth in the apostles' days than in any age before: yet not such a bringing forth outwardly, as might not be driven back. And therefore did the Lord allow it to be assaulted and prevailed over, in that wherein it was weak through the outwardness of it, that (after many days) he might manifest his strength in bringing it forth more perfectly.

Question. Where has this church been these many ages, since the dragon's sore assault and overcoming it, as to its outwardness?

Answer. In the wilderness. Rev. 12.

Question. What wilderness? Any outward, visible wilderness?

Answer. It is a parable, representing the scattered state of the seed after God's presence was withdrawn from the visible building, and it laid waste as to its life, and the appearances of his Spirit, and the dragon got into, and seated in, the form, 2 Thess. 2:4. then the seed and appearances of God were to be found elsewhere, and not in those buildings.

Question. How were those churches or buildings in the apostles' days laid waste?

Answer. The presence of the life and power makes the form living; and no longer is it or can it be so, than the life and power remain with it. Now they not abiding in the life and in the power (the apostasy coming, spoken of, 2 Thess. 2:3), the life and the power also withdrew from them, and left them the dead form, into which the prince of death immediately enters; and so that which was a church unto God while the life abode there, and they in the life, becomes a synagogue of Satan, he entering into the dead form, and being worshipped there in the dead form. So that it is not any outward gathering or profession that makes a church under the New Testament, but only the life and power. That gathering which is in the life and power is a true church; that which is not, is a synagogue of Satan, let them profess what they will. For the living God dwells in living temples only, and the prince of death dwells in all the territories of death.

Question. According to this rule there are, or have been, few true churches of God in the world since the days of the apostles.

Answer. The true church has been in a wilderness-state since the days of the apostles. A scattered seed have her children been, and she a widow forsaken; God providing a place for the inward part of his building, and giving up the outward part to the formal spirit, to the possession of the powers of darkness. Read Rev. 11:1,2. The Lord, by the withdrawing of his Spirit, took down his own building, gave up the outward court to the Gentiles, removed the inward temple, altar, and worshippers into the wilderness. And since that time, men have built many buildings, in the imitation of that which God built (every sort according to their skill, and reasonings of their wisdom about the thing); but they are not the same building. But the true building, the true church, is reproached by all these builders, and not known to be the thing, because hid from their eye.

Question. When shall this true church appear again?

Answer. When God, who gave her the wings of an eagle to fly into the wilderness, brings her the same wings again to fly out. Then shall she come forth clothed with the sun again, with the moon under her feet, and with her crown of stars.

Question. How may it appear that those present buildings which are to be found in the world are not the true churches?

Answer. Because they are built by men, and their strength stands not in the demonstration and power of the Spirit, but in the wisdom and power of man; take away that, they soon crumble and moulder of themselves. Beside, they are not clothed with the sun, have not the moon under their feet, nor know not the travail to bring forth the man-child, which the true church knows even in the wilderness.

Question. Why do men keep such buildings, and not rather mourn after the true building of God, which is built and preserved in the light and power of his Spirit?

Answer. Antichrist's time is not yet fully ended, nor the mists wherewith he blinds men's eyes scattered, nor the cup of his fornications (which makes everyone drunk and besotted as to the sight and knowledge of the true church, which drinks of it) taken from men's lips.

Question. How may I know the true church?

Answer. By being born of God's Spirit, and looking with that eye which he gives to those whom he begets in that light of life which shines from his presence: here his holy church and true spouse is discerned and distinguished from all false resemblances, and vain pretenders.

Question. Are there then many resemblances of the true church, and pretenders to be such, which are not so indeed?

Answer. Yes; there is the mother of harlots, Rev. 17:5. and her many daughters; all which pretend to be the true churches of Christ, but lack that life in themselves, and that union in spirit with him, which alone can make such.

Question. What makes a true church?

Answer. That alone which makes a spiritual body, and which unites that body to the head. There must be a true nature, and the union of that nature to the head, or there cannot be a marriage in spirit to the Lamb. Now the true church is Christ's spouse, *bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*, as truly of the seed of Abraham after the spirit, as the Jews were after the flesh. And *as he that says he is a Jew*, but lacks the true circumcision of the heart and spirit, does but lie, and is not indeed so; so *they that say they are a church*, but lack the nature of the church, they also lie, and are not a true gathering of Christians out of the world, but a synagogue of Satan, still abiding and worshipping in the spirit of the world. Rev. 2:9. and chap. 3:9.

Question. May not the true church be known by outward, visible marks, as most persons describe and



seek to find and distinguish her by?

Answer. No; not possibly in her wilderness state, nor hardly in her built-state.

Question. Why not possibly in her wilderness-state?

Answer. Because there she is stripped of them, and the harlots, or false churches, are clothed with them. Mark the thing: — In the very apostles' days, the false ministers and false Christians got into the form, and denied the power. 2 Tim. 3:5. Now after a season God leaves the form to them, Rev. 11:2. gathering his church out of that appearance into the hidden power. Here is the wilderness into which the church fled; the life, the power, which before appeared in the form, being withdrawn and separated from the form, and the living seed gathered into it, and worshipping in it. And who can now find the church, or learn the worship? Here the eye of the seed is tried, and the wisdom of the spirit of the true disciple. And here, ever since, all the world have been jangling about the form, while the true witnesses have been mourning after the power, testifying concerning the power, and enjoying what was to be given forth of it, in the present way of its dispensation in the wilderness.

Question. Why hardly in her built-state?

Answer. Because even then such variety of resemblances and likenesses of the true church may be built, as cannot be distinguished from the true itself by any outward marks. There were in the apostles' days false apostles, false ministers, and false churches; which, though they appeared as the apostles of Christ, as ministers of righteousness, as the churches of Christ, yet they were not so, but false prophets, deceitful workers, and synagogues of Satan. Now they which intend to deceive, appear most exactly in the form, and with the outward marks, if need require; and that which is true and substantial, is not so regardful of the outward form, but minds the inward life, truth and substance. He therefore that judges by the form and outward marks, cannot but judge that to be the true spouse which appears most in the form, and with the outward marks, and so is very liable to be deceived and err, by judging some of the false churches to be true, and the true to be false.

Question. What am I to do when I know the true church?

Answer. To wait in that which gives to be a member of it, and gives true union with it, whether it be in the wilderness-state, or in its built-state. For the same Spirit, which begets the child in the true life, will also lead to the church; and in that wisdom which is from above the true church will never be missed of; but in the earthly reasonings and guessings of man's wisdom, God's church (or New Testament building in the power of his Spirit) is easily missed. And he that misses of this, and is out of the pale of it, is it possible he should meet with the true salvation? "He that has an ear to hear, let him hear;" and he that has but so much as the heart of a man, let him consider, for the thing is of great weight, and of deep concernment to the soul.

Well: have but patience awhile, and the true church (which God's Spirit builds) shall be known, and all the false churches of men's building shall be known also. And that which God has built shall have the power from God, and the praise among men; and all the Babylonish buildings of man's confused spirit, and inconsistent wisdom, shall vanish away like smoke, and become a stink in all nostrils. For strong is

the Lord God of heaven and earth, who is confounding Babylon in all her gaudy attire, and glorious appearances, and raising up his Zion out of the dust. *Amen, hallelujah!*

## **SOME FURTHER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **CONCERNING THE SEED OF ISRAEL**

Question. OUT of what womb does the seed of Israel spring?

Answer. Out of the nature of eternal life, out of the bosom of eternal love, out of the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and the mother of all that are born of the Spirit.

Question. By what covenant are the children of Israel brought up?

Answer. By the covenant of faith in the love of the Father, which gives life and strength to obey.

Question. Is there obedience required in the new covenant?

Answer. Yes; the obedience of faith, the subjection of the nature and heart of the child, to the nature and will of the Father; which is as fully natural in the substance as it can be represented in any figure or shadow.

Question. What if there be disobedience?

Answer. The seed itself cannot disobey; but the vessel in which it is sown, and to which it is united, may prove weak, frail, brittle, yes, sometimes stubborn; the weight and chastisement whereof the seed also bears, and in patient suffering helps and cleanses the vessel through the virtue of the blood of Jesus, which is felt in the seed which comes from Jesus. And here is the blood of sprinkling known in the soul, which cleanses the conscience from dead works, and washes away the iniquity thereof.

Question. Can any fall from this covenant?

Answer. The covenant is with the seed forever, and with the seed's seed also is it firm; but the streamings forth of the light of the covenant do not always beget a seed, but only sometimes set man's nature on work, drawing forth the faith, love, and obedience thereof. Now this will not hold. All flesh is grass, and at one time or other will fade and wither; but there must be a being begotten of the Word, to live and abide forever.

Question. How is this begetting?

Answer. In the weakening of man's strength day by day, and raising up the seed, which seed gives life and strength to him that is weakened in the manhood.

Question. How is this done?

Answer. First by drawing forth what is in the man, and then by trying its strength, distressing the man with exercises beyond him. Thus the working man is brought down by the requirings of the law, they being too hard for him, and the believing seed is raised up; who, in the virtue of the living faith (whereof he receives supplies from the breath of eternal life), fulfills the righteousness of the law in the man, and also communicates a righteousness of a higher nature unto him.

Question. Why does God take this course with man?

Answer. It is proper and natural. How can a higher principle be raised in man, but by the death of the former? And how can the former die, but by such exercises, trials, and distresses as are proper to wear out the strength of its nature, and bring it into the nothingness, where that which is, springs up; when it has brought down that which appeared, but was not?

Oh! who can understand God's works in the world? Who can read the mystery of life and death in man? Oh, what a worm is man before his God! What is his nature? In what state is he able to walk with his God? God can keep covenant with man in any kind of dispensation; but man still fails: his heart deceives him, and he is not able to attain unto, or maintain any considerable proportion of, happiness to his soul by his covenant.

Question. What is man's covenant?

Answer. That which his nature desires of God to make him happy. That light, that counsel, that strength, that presence which his nature thinks sufficient, will not carry him through. No, let God show grace and mercy, and add helps unto him in the riches of his love, yet this will not do. How does man fall in every dispensation, where there is any stress laid on this covenant, though God is able to be a father and a husband therein!

Question. What is God's covenant?

Answer. That which his nature sees needful to make man happy in him, and to keep man in the enjoyment of his happiness. This, so far as it is dispensed, carries through; and when it is dispensed perfectly, will bring forth the perfect redemption and happiness of the creature.

Now then that soul that would travel towards life eternal;

First, Wait to feel a principle of life awakened, raised up, sown in your earth by the living God.

Secondly, Wait to receive all the light of life in every kind, that the Father of lights shall please to cause to shine in your heart, from this principle.

Thirdly, Be content to be tried and distressed, and have your strength broken day by day, and your wisdom confounded, that you may sink into, and pass away in, the weakness and foolishness which the Lord will bring upon you, before the wisdom and strength of his life appear in you.

Fourthly, Keep your eye and heart on the grace that first visited you, that there your footing may be, and your hopes fastened. Oh! receive the light still from the hand of grace, and look up there for strength to obey the light; that the earthly man get not a life in the obedience, and you forget the grace, and your need of Christ, the anointed of the Lord; and so you live on what you have received from God, and not Christ live in you; and look upon your working obedience as the righteousness, and feel not the righteousness of Christ, which is the free justification of his life and power, washing away the guilt of the ungodly!

Ah! narrow is the path that leads unto life; none can enter in at it, but the Seed, and the Seed's seed; even that which dies in the creatureship, in the principle which Adam received from the Lord, and springs up in the nature and being of this seed.

Read this, O travelers towards the holy land, with the eye which God creates! that you may run certainly in his begettings, in his creatings, in his leadings towards his land of eternal rest; even in the certain law and power of his endless life, and not in the uncertain reasonings, imaginings, and guessing at things by the human understanding.

## **TO ALL SUCH AS COMPLAIN THAT THEY LACK POWER**

**NOT APPLYING THEMSELVES TO YIELD SUBJECTION TO WHAT OF GOD IS MADE  
MANIFEST IN THEM, UPON A PRETENCE OF WAITING FOR POWER SO TO DO**

**[1661]**

THE Lord God of eternal power, who made man in his own image, he stretches forth his arm to save and redeem his lost creature; it is his power alone that effects the work of redemption; he quickens man, who is dead in trespasses and sins; he keeps alive, and leads on the quickened soul in the path of life; he conquers, scatters, and subdues all the enemies round about the soul, even all the lusts, corruptions, and temptations, which lead unto, and entangle in, perdition.

Yet the Lord God requires something of the man whom he saves, without which being found in man, and returned to him from man, he saves him not.

Question. What does he 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, but 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; work the works of God in the 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 that which 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 husbandman, who daily dresses the heart, that waits in the living principle for further life from the fountain, that it may bring forth the fruits of life more and more.

Now mark: Is it possible for any man to come to the eternal rest, that travels not in the path? Or is there any path, but the repentance, faith, and obedience of the living spirit; even of the child begotten by the eternal power, who is 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 work man into life, and to bring forth the fruits of life in man. Man overlooks the talent, joins not his heart to it, brings not forth the fruits of life to the giver, but cries he lacks power; and *what is he? What can he do? Can he cleanse his own heart? Can he kill his corruptions? Can he quicken himself? etc.*

Now mark again. There are several dispensations of God to mankind; in all 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. Look on him who is not obedient to the light, which he cannot but confess to shine in his heart, and often to reprove him; ask him why he does not obey it? Is not this his plea; *that he lacks power?* Now 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, but trust and follow the darkness, which leads into death, and into everlasting condemnation. Their plea is, *they lack power so to do.* Is this true?

I confess the power does not so flow forth to man, as man expects it; but the power of life works man out of death in a mystery, and begins in him as weakness. There is all the strength, all the power of the enemy, against the work of God in the heart. There is but a little thing (like a grain of mustard-seed), a weak thing, a foolish thing, even that which is not (to man's eye), to overcome all this; and yet in this 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, in the rising up of something against the mighty strength of corruption in him; which he returning towards, cleaving to, and waiting upon the Lord in, 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 be overcome and fall he knows not how. But he that waits for such a mighty appearance of power at first, looking so to begin, and after that manner to be preserved and carried on, can never in this capacity so much as walk in the path eternal: nor is not in the way of receiving the power, which 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 man knows not how, even by a sound of the eternal Spirit, which he is

not a fit judge of; and it grows up he knows not how; and the power appears and works in it, in a way that he is not aware of. He 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 thus it never comes; but 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 proper way of appearance, but expecting it some other way. And thus the enemy holds them in the bands of death, and they are captives in the strange land, refusing the Prince of life, in his daily offers of life, because they look not for him thus, but after another way and manner. And till 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.

Now for the sakes of such as are single-hearted, and yet withheld from the enjoyment of the life of God and of his pure power, through a way of wrong expecting it; I shall say a little concerning the operation of the power in quickening and leading on the quickened soul, as also concerning the way of its springing up in the heart, and the necessity of this way. I myself was long withheld from obedience to the light eternal, in its low appearance of discovering and convincing of sin, through this very deceit, believing that my condition required the manifest appearance of a very great power to help me; and so when sin overcame me, I did only mourn over it, crying after and waiting for power, but was kept from joining with, and cleaving to that, wherein the power springs up and manifests itself according to its own pleasure, quite contrary to the way of man's expectation.

*The operations of the power* are various and gradual, according to the condition and necessity of the soul whom it visits, and reaches forth its hand unto,

1. There is a discovery of the darkness, and of the erring of the heart from God. This is power; for this should never be in any heart, could all the powers of darkness there withstand it.
2. There is a rising of the heart against the evil, with a desire of deliverance from it, and of the springing up of the good in such power as might conquer it. This is a further appearance of power than the former, and a good beginning towards believing or joining with the redeeming arm, which all the powers of darkness (with all manner of subtlety) endeavor to divert the heart from.
3. There is an upright frame of spirit begotten, and a truth of heart formed towards the Lord; from which desires, and cries, and groans after his life and presence, and for deliverance from the enemy, and from under the power of his deceit, spring more and more.
4. There is a fear begotten in the heart of being deceived by the enemy, of being drawn from the feeling of, and panting after, the life and power of God.
5. There is a hope and trust in the Lord's goodness and mercy, with a daily waiting for his appearance, for the manifestation of his Spirit and pure presence, and for the springings up of his fresh life and precious virtue.
6. There are overturnings of the enemy, battering down his strong-holds, breaking of many snares, beating back of many furious assaults, and causing the plant of life to grow up, and triumph over all the powers of darkness.

7. There are secret stayings and upholdings of the heart in the hour of darkness, when God sees necessary to let forth the power thereof upon the soul, and to eclipse his own power. When the enemy buffets, tempts, prevails, and gets ground upon the soul, is drawing it back under the veil, even into the pit, and nothing appears near to stop it, or rescue the soul from death, and from the power of the grave, but the sting thereof enters and deeply wounds the soul; yet even then the power is near, secretly upholding, preserving, and watching over the soul; and waiting for the proper season of deliverance. "Nevertheless I am continually with you, you have holden me by my right hand," said David, when his feet had almost slipped into the grievous snare of desperate unbelief, and murmuring against God's dealings with him and the rest of his people.

Many more operations of the power might be mentioned, even of its tabernacling and glorious appearing in some vessels in various ways, both delighting itself in the heart, and also filling the heart with delight and joy in the pure life: but these things are better enjoyed and sweetly felt, in the silence of the fleshly part, than spoken of to the ear which is not fit to hear the sound thereof.

Secondly, *The way of the power's springing up in the heart*; which is,

1. In its turning from the darkness, in the faith, and in the pure obedience which flows from the faith. For as the soul turns from the power of darkness and death, towards the power of the eternal Spirit of light; so the power meets it, embraces it, appears to it, and manifests itself in it, proportionable to its present capacity and condition. And as the soul, being touched with the living virtue, gives itself up to believe, and to trust the power which draws; so the power manifests itself in the heart, according to the proportion of the faith which the eternal virtue has begotten there. And as the soul in the faith gives itself up to obey, so the power appears and works the obedience. For we can do nothing of ourselves; but being called, being drawn, being required to do that which is far beyond our strength, and giving up thereto; the life springs, the power appears, which does the work. This the Philippians had experience of, to whom the apostle gave that exhortation: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is the unbeliever hangs back, and cries where shall I have power? But the faith follows the moving and drawing of the Spirit, and the power never fails the faith. But that which cries, how shall I get out of Egypt? *Which way shall I ever be able to pass through this intricate wilderness? How shall I overcome those mighty enemies, which already have the possession of the land I should inherit, and are strongly fenced in it, and mighty in strength to keep their hold thereof?* This is not the right seed, this is not the true Israel, for whom the everlasting inheritance of the life and of the pure power is prepared.

2. Under the cross, under the yoke to the corrupt (yes, and to the very natural), the power springs. The false birth would have the power spring in a way pleasing to itself, at the time its wisdom sees necessary, and in the way its will would have it; but the power springs up according to its own wisdom, at its own time, and after its own way. When the man would have it, then it flies from him; and when it is not expected, nor perhaps desired (at least in that way wherein it chooses to appear), then it springs up and puts forth itself. Most men, that have felt any thing of God, cannot but desire his life and power; but most fly the cross, wherein it has chosen to appear; and so they can never meet with it, but are still complaining for the lack of it. In the power is the ease, the rest of the gospel. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me*, says Christ, *and you shall find the rest which flows from the power*. This

made Paul rejoice in the cross of Christ, whereby the fleshly lusts were brought down in him; and the life and eternal power sprang in the seed of the kingdom: for under the cross the seed grows up and flourishes, and the flesh withers and dies. And as the power of flesh and death wastes, so the power of Spirit and life increases.

3. The power springs under the fear, and in the uprightness and love which God has begotten. I put these together, for there is a close unity between them. The fear is the dwelling of the upright heart, and the love is within the fear. He that distrusts himself, feels his own nothingness, finds no power to do any thing God requires, and yet also fears to stay behind the light of God's Spirit, in any thing it requires, and so finds a putting on forwards in the faith; in him the power delights to appear. He that would feel strength before-hand, and act in the sense of that strength, from him the power withdraws; but he that is weak, and has no strength, but still as it freely drops into him from moment to moment, this is the vessel the power chooses to manifest itself to, and to be continually appearing in. This is the new covenant, "I will put my fear in their hearts." And where the fear of the new covenant is found, so much life, power, and eternal virtue, as is necessary for the present state of that heart, cannot be far off. So in the *upright-hearted*, in the heart that is true to God, the power of deceit cannot dwell, but the power of truth delights to fill it, in a way suitable to the state of the spirit, and so as may be seen by the eye of the spirit, and felt by the spiritual sense. And in the love is the constraining power, which constrains from the evil path, from the path of unbelief and disobedience, into the path of life.

Thirdly, *The necessity of this way of the springing up of the power*, and not in such a manifest way as man's heart desires, and as man's eye expects.

It is necessary in several respects. In respect of God, in reference to the creature, and in reference to the soul's enemies.

1. *In respect of God*. It is necessary that his power and life should spring up in the creature in its own way, according to the counsel of his own wisdom, suitable to his own nature, and not in the way which the creature chalks out, and expects it in. God must be like himself, and walk in his own path in every thing he does. He is a God that hides himself in the mystery of his working, throughout the whole track of man's redemption; and man must be wrought out of himself, out of his own thoughts, expectations, gathered apprehensions concerning the kingdom and way to life, and led in a path he does not know (nor ever can know any longer than he is in it); and in ways he has not been acquainted with. The way of life is still new, every moment fresh and living; and the earthly part of those, who may have in some measure felt the power of regeneration, cannot know it, nor walk in it. Consider this, O you that fence yourselves against the present appearance of the Spirit, and against the convictions, demonstrations, and drawings of its eternal light and power, by something which you have formerly felt and known.

2. *In reference to the creature*, the power of God must needs appear thus hiddenly, and in such a mysterious way.

1. That the creature might go through all those exercises of spirit, which are necessary to fit it for its inheritance in the holy land. There are straits, lacks, trials, temptations, inward weaknesses, buffetings from the enemy, withdrawals of the life, etc., God sees necessary to exercise the spirits of his with, that he might fit them for himself, and for a safe enjoyment of his life in fulness; which could not be, if



there were such a manifest power to begin with and continually at hand, to perform all in and for the soul, as many men wait for, and think necessary to have.

2. That the fleshly part might be thoroughly worn out and destroyed. When the power appears and works mightily in the soul, there is something apt to get up, to exalt himself by the power, and to abuse the power; and if the power were not withdrawn, and this tormented and famished in the absence of the power, and in the withdrawing of the sweet appearance of life, a wrong thing would be stealing into the inheritance, and the soul would never be thoroughly purified, nor come to a pure enjoyment of the power. Therefore does the Lord appear in this mysterious way, *that the promise might be sure to the seed*; that the seed which is the right heir of the power, might come alone to inherit the power, and the false birth not touch the least enjoyment of it, but feel the bitter strokes of death and destruction from it. What had become of Paul, if he had had power to resist the buffetings of the enemy, as he desired? Would not his fleshly part have remained in the exaltation, and not have been brought down? 2. Cor. 12:7.

3. *In reference to the enemy.* The enemy could never be wholly conquered, his strong holds in the heart broken down, and the redemption from under his hand perfected, were it not for this mysterious way of the appearing and working of the power, even out of the sight of man's eye, and contrary to his will and expectation. For had man such a power as he desires, still present with him; had he faith in his power, or obedience in his power, or could he take up the cross in his power, or have strength to fight against the enemy as he desires and expects, the enemy would still find entrance into him, and keep his hold of him. But God, who knows the state of the creature, with the strength and passages of the enemy into man, by working with his mighty power in man according to his own will, and in the way of his own wisdom (contrary to what man can desire or expect, but as he is taken into, and comprehended in, the eternal will), carries on his work sweetly, and safely, and perfects the salvation of those who will not, who run not, who desire not to be any thing, but wait to feel and know his power, and to become subject to it, and lie under, even in the lowest way of its manifestation and appearance.

Objection. This may be true in the ordinary way of redemption of souls; but there are deep captivities (even the captivity of Babylon inwardly, spiritually) which surely will need a very great appearance of the power of God to deliver out of; and what can that soul do, but wait there under the captivity, until the mighty power arise?

Answer. It is true; the power must needs be very great, and the appearance of it wonderful, which delivers out of such captivity; but yet the beginnings of it may be small, and out of the sight of that eye which looks and waits for so great an appearance. Have you not light enough already to begin your travel out of Babylon? Have you begun your travel? Do you walk in the light which shines upon you in that dark land, to gather and lead you out of it? Or will you not begin to come out, till the very glory and brightness of Zion shine upon you? If there be but light and power enough to lead you one step out of the land of darkness and confusion of spirit, towards obedience to the lowest or meanest truth, that is sufficient for you at present; and as you are found faithful here, more will spring in you; but if you stop here (or at any time after you have begun, and made some progress, because of any thing which falls out contrary to your expectation), then that which should lead you on, and strengthen you, stops also; and you meet not with that which is found and enjoyed by others in the way, because you pass not on in it, but balk your proper path, judging something more necessary towards your beginning or

progress, than the Lord judges, or yet sees fit to impart to you.

Thus the enemy betrays you, and holds you in his chains, which might be loosed and cast off by little and little, did you singly give up to the little appearance of that light and power which is able to unbind them, and not expect more at first (or afterwards) than the Lord has allotted for your present condition. And let me tell you this from certain knowledge and experience; that you, who have been high, and have tasted much of God, but have abused it, and fed the wrong part with it, both in yourself and others; you must be brought lower than the rest, and for a long season be kept lower; that the pure seed (which has deeply been buried in you) may overgrow and sink all your knowledge, experiences, and observations, concerning the eternal life, and its way of appearance, which formerly you had some true taste of, but now hold out of the life.

You must come down, you must become nothing by degrees, you must lie at the foot of the reprovings of that light, which you think you have gone far beyond, and be glad of a little help now and then in the lowliness and humility of your heart, which must not choose what appearance and manifestation it will have from God, before it will begin to follow him, but be glad of ever so little, that the infinite wisdom sees good to give forth by the hand of his mercy.

Whoever have been high, and are still waiting and expecting in the heights of their own wisdom and observations concerning the kingdom, let them take heed of *despising the day of small things*, and know that their proper beginning (yes the very path of eternal life itself) lies in the lowness, in the humility, even in that nothingness which bows before the least light of the day, and with gladness of heart enters into, and walks in it. For this I certainly know; the wise, the observing eye, the vast comprehending heart, which waits for such an extraordinary power, judging it cannot begin following the light, which daily appears to check and reprove, without some great manifest appearance of power; this cannot see the low little path of life, which is proper for it to walk in, and to the end whereof it must travel, if ever it come to sit down in the kingdom, or to inherit the power of the endless life. Precious is the dispensation of this age, great is the power and glory which is arising; but the wise and knowing of this age are shut out of it, as they have been out of the life and truth of the dispensations of God in all ages. Happy is he who is not above that, wherewith God visits his soul to redeem it.

#### **POSTSCRIPT.**

THAT persons, who have not traveled into the land of life, lack power, that is out of doubt. The state of Israel in its travels is a state of weakness and need. How can they in the wilderness but lack that which is to be possessed in the Holy Land? But do you lack power to begin the travel with? Do you lack what proportion of power the Lord sees necessary for you in your present estate? Is there nothing at all discovered to you which is contrary to God, either in your heart or in your conduct or in your worship, which you do not so much as strive to give up to the Lord in, waiting upon him for his power and strength to appear in helping you? The light appears to discover and lead out of the darkness: now in giving up to the light, and not doubting but that which calls and draws out will give strength, and enable to come out, the power is met with unawares. But that which stands gazing and looking out after a power, which it expects to meet with before it will so much as begin to follow the light; that cannot but abide in the captivity, and miss of that power which redeems from it. Therefore,

1. Wait to feel the light of life discovering and drawing from the evil; and let it choose what it shall please first to discover and draw from. And though it be little, and very inconsiderable in your eyes, yet dispute not, but where the light first begins to lead, do you there begin to follow.

Then in this waiting and subjecting to the manifestations of the light, out of the self-will, self-wisdom, self-knowledge, self-judgment, in the lowliness and abasedness of the mind and spirit before the Lord, the begettings of life in the light are felt, and the renewing into his pure image.

Afterwards that which is begotten (and begun to be renewed in the divine image) is by degrees taught more distinctly to know, discern, and walk in the path of life.

And after this, to that which is thus begotten, and taught the living faith and obedience (which is wrought by the mighty power of God, though running in a low, secret, hidden way, from the eye of the creature), the great power is revealed, and he grows strong in the power *for God*, and against the enemies of his soul; and by this strength and feeling of God's presence, they *fall daily and continually before him*, and then his victory over them goes on with joy.

But he that stops at first may grow wise and conceited, concerning the things of the kingdom after the flesh, and may hope for great things at last; but by the deceit of the subtlety, is kept out of the living path, wherein they are to be waited for, reaped, and enjoyed.

Now for the encouragement of such as are willing to travel on in the weakness, yielding up their members to the present manifestation of the light, and waiting for the further appearance of the power; it is on my heart to add a letter of a dear friend and brother of mine in the truth, who has been a deep traveler and fellow-sufferer with me formerly, before this help came forth from the throne of God, since the day-spring from on high has vouchsafed to visit us, and to guide our feet in the way of everlasting peace.

The LETTER is as follows: —

Dear Friend,

"My dear and tender love salutes you, in that love from which I had my being, and from which sprang all my Father's children, who are born from above, heirs of an everlasting inheritance. Oh! how sweet and pleasant are the pastures which my Father causes all his sheep to feed in; there is variety of plenty in his pastures, milk for babes, and strong meat for them of riper age, and wine to refresh those that are ready to faint, even the wine of the kingdom, that makes glad the heart, when it is ready to faint by reason of the infirmities. Sure I am, none can be so weary, but he takes care of them; nor none so nigh fainting, but he puts his arm under their heads; nor none can be so beset with enemies on every side, but he will arise and scatter; nor none so heavy laden and big with young, but he takes notice of them, and gently leads them, and will not leave them behind unto the merciless wolf, because they are his own, and his life is the price of their redemption, and his blood of their ransom; and if they be so young that they cannot go, he carries them in his arms; and when they can feel nothing stirring after him, his bowels yearn after them; so tender is this good Shepherd after his flock. I can tell, for I was as one that went astray, and wandered upon the barren mountains; and when I had wearied myself with

wandering, I went into the wilderness, and there I was torn as with briars, and pricked as with thorns, sometimes thinking this was the way, and sometimes concluding that was the way, and by and by concluding all was out of the way; and then bitter mourning came upon me, and weeping for lack of the interpreter; for when I sought to know what was the matter, and where I was, it was too hard for me. Then I thought I would venture on some way where it was most likely to find a lost God, and I would pray with them that prayed, and fast with them that fasted, and mourn with them that mourned, if by any means I might come to rest, but found it not, until I came to see the candle lighted in my own house, and my heart swept from those thoughts, and imaginations, and willings, and runnings, and to die unto them all, not heeding of them, but watching against them, lest I should let my mind go a whoring after them. And here I dwelt for a time as in a desolate land uninhabited, where I sat alone as a sparrow upon the house-top, and was hunted up and down like a partridge upon the mountains, and could rest nowhere, but some lust or thought or other followed me at the heels, and disquieted me night and day, until I came to know him in whom was rest, and no occasion of stumbling, in whom the devil has no part; and he became unto me as a hiding-place from the storms, and from the tempests. Then came my eyes to see my Savior, and my sorrow fled away, and he became made unto me all in all, my wisdom, my righteousness, and my sanctification; in whom I was and am complete, to the praise of the riches of his grace and goodness that endures forever. Therefore be not discouraged, O you tossed as with tempests! nor dismayed in yourself; because you see such mighty hosts of enemies rising up against you, and besetting you on every side: for none was so beset and tried, and tempted, as the true Seed was, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But be you still in your mind, and let the billows pass over, and wave upon wave; and fret not yourself because of them, neither be cast down, as if it should never be otherwise with you: sorrow comes at night, but joy in the morning; and the days of your mourning shall be over, and the accuser will God cast out forever. For therefore was I afflicted, and not comforted, and tempted, and tried, for this end, that I might know how to speak a word in due season, unto those who are tempted and afflicted as I once was; as it was said unto me in that day when sorrow lay heavy upon me. Therefore be not disconsolated, neither give heed unto the reasonings and disputings of your own heart; nor the fears that rise therefrom, but be strong in the faith, believing in the light which lets you see them, and his grace you will know to be sufficient for you, and his strength to be made perfect in your weakness. And so you rather will glory in your infirmities, that his power may rest upon you, than in your earnest desires to be rid of them; for by these things you will come to live in the life of God, and joy in God, and glory in tribulation, when you have learned in all conditions to be contented; and through trials, and deep exercises, is the way to learn this lesson. These things in dear love to you I have written, being something sensible of your condition, and the many snares you are daily liable unto; therefore watch that you fall not into temptation, and my God and Father keep you in the arms of eternal love, over all, unto the end, unto his praise; Amen.

John Crooke

# **SOME QUERIES TO THE STRICT AND ZEALOUS PROFESSORS OF THIS AGE**

**(such as stick in the letter, but are strangers to the life and power), to provoke them to jealousy**

**Lest the heathen & open sinners outstrip them and enter into the kingdom of the pure everlasting light before them**

Query I. WHETHER God, since the fall of man from the purity and glory of his state, does truly and really desire the salvation of all mankind; and so would have them come to the knowledge of the truth, that they might believe it, receive it, walk in it, and so obtain salvation thereby? Or whether he would have only some few of them to receive it, and be saved, and the rest to perish?

Query II. If God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, which is the means of salvation, then whether there is sufficient done by God to convey the knowledge of his truth to all men, so as they may come to the knowledge thereof and be saved? Or whether there is such a defect on God's part, that some men never had sufficient means to come so far to the knowledge of his truth, as that they might come into that way of salvation thereby?

Query III. Though God does please to add superabundant means, in the riches of his grace, towards some, more than others; as to the Jews under the law, and to the disciples of Christ under the gospel; yet whether there is not so much light of the Spirit communicated to all, as, if followed, might lead them out of the darkness, and from under the power of it?

Query IV. Whether God be not so near to every man, as that possibly he may seek after him, and find him? And if he do find him, and his heart cleave to him, whether it can possibly be but virtue should issue forth from God, to draw him out of the alienation from him, and out of the power of sin, death, and hell?

Query V. Whether, if a man feel God, and cleave to God, and begin to discern the streamings of light from him, and follow the Lord therein, whether God will not accept this man therein? And whether his divine light let into him (being believed in and obeyed) will not purify him from darkness, unbelief, and disobedience? And whether God will not impute to this man what Christ performed on man's behalf in the flesh, he being in unity with, and in subjection to, the light and power whereby it was wrought (wherein is the fellowship with the blood, and wherein alone it washes from the sin), though as to the outward knowledge of what was outwardly done, the man may possibly be ignorant? And seeing it is not absolutely necessary towards the involving in the guilt of Adam's sin, the outward knowing what Adam did; but the proceeding from, and being found in, the same spirit and nature, does sufficiently convey it; so whether being gathered into, and found in, Christ's spirit, even in faith, obedience, and subjection to the light thereof in the heart, whether this is not also sufficient to convey the righteousness of Christ? And whether God will fail to impute it to that man?

Query VI. Whether true religion, spiritual worship, and the salvation of the soul, do not depend upon the Spirit of the Lord, who is near to every heart with his eternal light, which he can easily convey to any heart, whose ear is opened to hearken to his breathings and drawings? So that it is easy to the Lord to save any of the sons of men, even in the darkest and remotest corners of the earth; and he can cast off those who seem highest in zeal, and most flourishing under any outward means of salvation.

Oh, wonderfully infinite is the Lord! Who shall bound his Spirit? Happy is he that fears before him, and in his fear learns to depart from iniquity, and walk in the good path that his Spirit teaches. He is near to God, and shall taste of the good things, and shall not be rejected for lack of outward knowledge; but whatever was done for lost man, he that is found in the light of life (and in the obedience to the Spirit of life) shall reap the benefit of; but he that boasts in his knowledge of these things, and of his faith in Christ Jesus, yet not being found in the true, living, eternal light of the Spirit (but an enemy to it, and ignorant of it), the Lord will rend his confidence from him, in a day that he is not aware of.

Glorious was the dispensation of the law, and great was the advantage to the Jews thereby above the Gentiles; yet they missing the Spirit and life of it (and growing wise in their own apprehensions, and interpretations about it), fell beneath the Gentiles, becoming greater strangers to the power and wisdom of God, and harder to be reached and brought in under the subjection of the gospel. More glorious was the dispensation of the gospel to the Christians, and much greater was their advantage than that of the Jews; but an apostasy coming, and they losing the true power and Spirit, and growing wise by a literal knowledge of some of the things of God in the earthly part, and forming interpretations of scriptures, and entering into practices in that wisdom, they are now become at as great a distance from this powerful visitation of God by his Spirit (which raises the seed, and springs up freshly in the hearts of those, whom the Lord our God does call out of their fenced cities, and allure into the wilderness) as the Jews were at from that appearance before the apostasy; and in as great danger are the children of the kingdom to be cast out now as then. Oh that my God would please to open the ear of some tender and upright-hearted among them to hear this testimony, that they might no longer stumble at that, which alone is able to lead them to God, and to make them happy in God.

Is there any uniting with God, or enjoying of God, but by his Spirit? Is there any receiving of God's Spirit but within the heart? Does he not appear there by his light, and in his power? What if God please to give forth a measure of his eternal light in the heart of his chosen, to open that to them which they could never see before, and to bring them into a nearer unity with him than ever they knew before, may he not do it? No, is not such a thing needful to help out of the deep and intricate apostasy, wherein have been so many twistings and twinings of the subtle serpent about every step or appearance of reformation, and to gather the wandering sheep, who were scattered up and down, and sorely distressed for lack of the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to their estates and conditions? Have not every sort bent the Scriptures in the reasonings of their own minds, and made them speak according to their own heart's lusts? And is not every one wise in his own eyes, and strong in his own tower and fenced city? Surely there was great need of an appearance of the Lord to shut out the wisdom of man, and to help the poor, the needy, the fatherless, the weak panting babes. And blessed be the Lord God, who has appeared; and blessed are those who have seen his light, and bowed at the feet of his living appearance, and felt the virtue of his saving arm, scattering their lusts and corruptions; yes, also raising up and bringing forth his pure seed in the fresh power, dominion, and

authority of his perfect life, which reigns in the hearts which the Lord has regenerated and sanctified for evermore.

O my friends, my friends! that that eye might be once blinded in you which hinders the sight of God; and the eye opened which beholds his glory, and also takes pleasure in his lowest appearance. The babe alone has the mysteries of the kingdom revealed to him, (the wise and prudent are excluded; the birth after the flesh, in every one, must be famished and destroyed) and he alone can see in the eternal light this dispensation of the everlasting gospel after the apostasy, which the Lord hides from those who are wise in the letter of the former dispensation of the same gospel, but cannot read it as it was given forth in the Spirit then, nor as it is now again held forth in the same Spirit and power. O my friends! this is the truth to you (wait on the Lord, that you may understand it from him): Your right eye must be put out, (which will never cease offending you, and causing you to stumble, so long as it is able to see) and all your knowledge which you hold out of the life become as dross and dung to you, if ever you taste and come to enjoy the excellency and glory of this appearance of God in his eternal Spirit, who has descended from on high into the hearts of his chosen, to prepare them for his spiritual temple, that he may dwell in them, and they in him. And he will dwell in them, and they shall dwell in him, to the full delight and satisfaction of their hearts, and to the confusion of all those who remain despising and reproaching this his glorious appearance, and his people in whom he has appeared. The day is not far off, wherein this will be made manifest; wherein great bitterness and anguish of spirit will befall those who can only see the glory afar off, but cannot inherit it, being found in that nature and spirit which is separated from it, and eternally shut out of it.

ISAAC PENINGTON

# **SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THAT PORTION OF SCRIPTURE ROMANS 14:20.**

**for the service of such in this present age, whose eyes and hearts the Lord shall please to open, to see and consider the weight of the truth thereof**

**With some few weighty words of advice to several sorts of people, according to their different states**

**"For meat destroy not the work of God." Rom. 14:20**

**[1662]**

## **OBSERVATION 1**

***God has a work in some men's hearts.***

THE mighty God, who made heaven and earth, and whose eyes run to and fro through both, he, by the finger of his pure power, touches some of the hearts of the children of men, and in the pure demonstration of his living Spirit is found working there. Religion, true religion, is not a matter of opinion (as men, who have not tasted of the power, are apt to imagine), but a *new creation and work of God* in the heart of the creature, sowing the light and life of his Spirit there, and by it working man out of the darkness and death of sin (which is the destruction and misery of the soul), into his life and blessedness.

## **OBSERVATION II**

***That this work of God in man is liable to be destroyed.***

God could so have made man as that he could not have fallen. He could so have comprehended man's spirit in the pure power of his life, as that man could not have broke out of it. But it pleased him to make him under a law, wherein, waiting upon, and watching to, the power of life, he might be preserved, and remain happy; but departing from it, he should lose his state, and sink into misery. God could also so redeem man, as that no power should stop or interrupt his work; but it pleases him also to hold forth *a law of redemption*, according to which, his work of redemption may either go forward or backward. As man is drawn by the Spirit of God, and follows his leadings out of the corruption, out of the vanity, out of the earthly nature, out of the wisdom, reasonings, and spirit of this world, so the work goes forward. As man is tempted, hearkens unto, and is drawn back by any of these, from the leadings of God's Spirit, so the work goes backward, and degrees of destruction overtake and come upon the work of God in that heart.



### OBSERVATION III

#### ***A little thing will destroy the work of God in the heart.***

A matter of meat, eating but a little meat doubtingly, out of the faith (wherein is the preservation from the destruction), this leads into the sin, where death and destruction is still met with. For in the path of life, in the faith, in the obedience to God's Spirit, there alone is the preservation of the work of God; but in the unbelief, in the disobedience, is the doubting (though about ever so small a matter), there is death and destruction met with, if the person venture upon that which he doubts of. Those who have traveled in the path of life, I know can witness this. Oh, how small a thing brings a veil over the life! What a little giving way to the reasonings of the earthly spirit about a small matter drives back the work of God in the heart, and brings anguish and misery upon the soul, causing the hiding the light of God's countenance, which is the life and joy of the renewed spirit! God is a great king, and all his leadings and teachings are weighty; and he that rebels, or neglects in the least thing, must bear his burden; unless he feel the humiliation of his soul, and the remission from the spirit of the Lord, the grace of God pitying him, and the blood of his Son washing him.

### OBSERVATION IV

#### ***No man should do that which tends to destroy the work of God in himself, or the work of God in another.***

There is no such thing allowable by God for any man to do (whether in public government, or in any kind of commerce or interaction amongst men, or in one's private course of walking) which tends to destroy the work of God. The intent of government, either in church or state, was never to destroy the work of God in any man. Government is of God, both in church and state. But that way of government which destroys his work in any, is not of him; but contrary to him, and against him. Oh that men could consider, and had the balance of truth to weigh things in, that they might bow before the God of truth, and not strive with their Maker about his work in the world!

My soul has mourned, I may say, almost from my cradle, about the estate of this creation. To behold man fallen from his glory, departed from his God, living without the sense of him, and sowing the seeds of eternal misery for his poor soul (which he must as certainly reap as he has sown, unless he travel the path of redemption in the powerful leadings and guidance of God's Holy Spirit); this has so broken my heart (together with the close exercises which have continually attended this poor wearied spirit), that I have often wondered how the natural life could be contained in the natural vessel.

I am a lover of mankind in general, and have been a deep sufferer with, and traveler for, all the miserable. None knows the path of my sorrows, or the extent of my bowels, but he that made me. It is not natural or kindly to me to upbraid any man with any kind of wickedness, or ever so justly deserved misery; but my bowels work concerning him towards the spring of eternal power and compassions, even as I would be pitied and represented to the Father of mercies in the like condition. Indeed I have been emptied from vessel to vessel, and tossed with multitudes of storms and tempests; yet the savor of my life remains with me to this day, and the Spirit of my God breathes on my heart; blessed be his holy name forever! And though I walk with one sort of people, because my heart says (yes, the Spirit of

the eternal God has witnessed unto me, and shown me in that light which cannot deceive, and to that eye which cannot be deceived) that they are the people whom he has chosen out of all the gatherings (throughout the earth) from the apostasy, to manifest his power in, and his presence among; I say, though I have been guided and led by the Spirit of the Lord to walk among these; yet am I not bounded there, either in the love, or in the unity of my heart, but I have unity with the integrity and zeal for God which is in others, of what sort or gathering soever; and I have tender bowels for all, even for those which hate and persecute that which is my life, and has the love of my heart forever.

Oh! how have I prayed for the lost world! For all the souls of mankind how has my soul bowed in unutterable breathings of spirit before my God, and could not be silenced until he quieted my spirit in righteousness and excellency of his will, and bid me leave it to him. And as touching this nation, and the several sorts in it, even those who seem most cast off, and without all sense; yet the preciousness of their souls have I spread before the Lord my God with tears.

And now I have something to say, in the love of my heart, and in the shinings of the light of my God, to several sorts of people, which nearly concerns them; as those whose hearts are weighty and serious (and who are not drunk up in the earthliness of the sensual nature, or misbiased by pre-assumed principles from the wrong ground) may easily perceive.

### **FIRST**

**To such as never knew what belonged to tenderness of conscience towards God, but have spent all their days either in licentiousness of spirit, or in a dead formality; to such my soul says:**

Oh Friends! wait to feel the power of God upon your hearts (which is present with that which sometimes lets you see the evils thereof); that they may be melted and made tender by him, fit to receive the impressions of his life. Why should you go down to the pit in a dream, and center in the land of misery? You have immortal souls in these earthen vessels, which must either be redeemed to God by the power of his life, or be shut up from his glorious presence in the chambers of death. It is a dreadful thing to appear before God after death, and receive the sentence of condemnation for the things done in the body. Oh that the eye of your souls were awakened, that you might see the hazard and danger you are incurring daily; and might know the hope of escape set before mankind, by the appearance of the grace in you, and learn of the living God to fly thereto for succor, that you might be sheltered in the evil hour, which hastens quickly upon all flesh!

### **SECONDLY**

**To such as formerly have been tender and sensible, but are now grown hard and deaf to the voice of God's Spirit in their hearts and consciences; this is the language of my soul in the love and life of my God:**

Oh that you could wait to feel the hammer and stroke of God upon that which is hard, that it might be broken by him; and that that which is high, and lifted up above his pure fear (where the law of his life

is learned, and the souls of his saints preserved), might be brought down and abased before him! Great is your danger; exceeding difficult is your recovery. Yet there is strength in the arm of the Lord God to strike through your deadness, and to quicken the immortal principle of his life in you. Why should you, who have once tasted of the goodness of God, become more miserable than the rest of the sons of men? Why have you departed from that which once gave you a true taste of life, and of the sweetness of redemption by it, into that spirit which is sealed up in the death, in the midst of its greatest wisdom, and surest footing? Oh, return, return to that which leads to the living God, that you may travel (in the exercises of his Spirit) out of the wisdom and spirit of this world, unto the land of the soul's peace and rest!

### **THIRDLY**

**To such as are still tender, and dare not but exercise a conscience towards God, even in these searching and trying times:**

Friends, keep your standing in the life of God. What God has begotten in you, let it depend upon him. Let him do what he will with his own in you, and let the creature be subject to that living principle, which God has sown and raised in your hearts; sell not your peace with God for any ease or advantage in this world. Let the tenderness of your consciences, which is of value with God, be precious also in your eyes. The times and seasons are in the Father's hand, and he sees good to let this day of trial come upon you. His grace is able to carry you all through. It will be for his honor, to let all the world see how dear your God is to you, and how able you are (in the meekness and strength of the Lamb's Spirit) to suffer for his name's sake. Your will, O God, be done. The cup which our Father gives us, shall we not drink it? The Lord preserve you in uprightness of heart towards him, in meekness of spirit towards those that afflict you, and in true love and good-will towards all; that his light, which has gathered you, may shine over all the darkness which opposes it; and his life, which has quickened and preserved you, may be famous over all the territories and dominions of death.

### **FOURTHLY**

**To such as are hard-hearted, and of a persecuting spirit towards the tender-conscienced:**

Oh that you knew what you did! You are enemies to the most precious thing to be found among the sons of men. You strike at what God loves and cherishes, and takes great pains to bring the creature to. You strive to keep that down upon which the happiness of mankind depends; yes, you consult and take much pains to remove that out of the way, which stands between you and the judgments of God. Oh that your eyes were opened! for surely then you could not proceed in this course.

Well! the Lord will open the eyes of many; and mercy towards mankind is issuing from his throne; and he will smite that through and through which makes the earth miserable and desolate of his life. But oh that man could hear in the day of his prosperity, that adversity might not come upon him!

Wait to read these things in the life from which they sprang; and then tell me whether there is not a

cause for what I write.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

THERE has been a great apostasy, since the days of the apostles, from the living power, into dead forms of worship and devotion, where likenesses of truth have been set up, instead of the truth itself. Now the Lord is gathering his true seed (even Israel, his beloved offspring) out of all dead forms of all kinds, into his living truth, and into the true, spiritual worship; and who is he that shall be able to stop him herein? Let him consider his strength, who girds himself to the battle against him: for not by might, nor by the power of man, but by the Spirit of life in his called, faithful, chosen, and innocent lambs, will the Lord of glory carry on his work in the world.

# **THREE QUERIES PROPOUNDED TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT**

**IN THE FEAR OF THE MOST HIGH, AND IN THE TENDER LOVE OF MY SOUL TO  
THEM**

**[no date]**

## **PREFACE**

THE main thing conducive towards man's safety and happiness, is to see things aright; and he that sees aright, must see with a right eye. There is an eye which cannot see the things of God; there is a heart also which is insensible of his warnings, and so runs into the pit. There is also an eye, to which God gives the true sight, which foresees the evil, and seeks a hiding-place; and a heart which fears its Maker, and waits on him for counsel, distrusting its own understanding, which it feels shallow and apt to err. Oh that man might feel his lack of God, and receive a principle of divine life from him, and be fixed and act therein! If I should pray thus particularly for every one of you, would you be offended with me? I have written something here in the kindlings of my love, and in the light of life which shines in my heart: oh that the Lord would please to open a vein of the same life in you! and then would you read them in the same, and, in a secret sense of spirit, feel what they are, and from where they come. Now if it should please the Lord that any of you should feel any touches of heart, and secret assent of soul to the truth of them, oh! take heed of the fleshly wisdom and reasonings of the earthly mind, which will soon rise up afterwards, to wear out the sense of any good that God begets in the heart.

### THREE QUERIES etc.

#### QUERY I.

WHETHER you do certainly and infallibly know what was the ground or cause why the hand of the Lord was so heavy upon this nation, and why he overturned the government thereof, and brought the honorable into contempt?

Three things are supposed to be taken for granted in this QUERY.

First, That it was the hand of the Lord that did this. It is he that has the anguish of soul, and the diseases of body, at his command; and afflicts both men's bodies and souls at his pleasure. And he also afflicts nations, with the powers and authorities thereof, when it seems good unto him. Now this is the thing which is mainly to be eyed by particular persons, and also by nations, in whatever befalls them: namely, the hand of the Lord in things.

Secondly, That there was a ground and cause for which the Lord did it. The Lord is tender-hearted, and loves his creature, delighting to do it good, and does not afflict it out of any pleasure he has therein, but upon a kind of necessity, that he may bring down evil and bring up good in a nation. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." It is no pleasure to the Lord to torment his creatures; but to destroy the seeds of corruption and unrighteousness, and to bring up the good seed which he has sown in the hearts of men, this is a pleasure to him. Now as your afflictions were very great, and the alterations in this nation strange; so there was a consideration in the Lord's eye to countervail them, or they had never been.

Thirdly, that it is requisite and necessary for you, certainly and infallibly to understand the ground why the Lord did this; what his meaning was; what he was offended at, and intended to bring down; what he was pleased with, and intended to give scope to spring up and grow under this confusion; which could not under the former settlement.

The reason why this is necessary for you, is this: because unless you certainly understand this thing, you may err and mistake in your present course, setting up the same things now, which the heart of the Lord was then against, and endeavoring to suppress the same things, which it is the will of the Lord should grow up, and so may provoke the same hand against you again; which truly I think is not good for you to do, nor indeed can I think so of you, as that you willingly would do it. Therefore pray to the Lord for the upright balance to weigh a thing of such a nature in, and of so deep concernment to you; for if you do run a contrary course to the mind of the Lord, and he be provoked against you, and stretch forth his mighty arm and overthrow you, it will then be too late for you to consider of these things.

#### QUERY II

Whether, when the Lord did overturn the former powers, with the glory and beauty of this nation, and raise up other powers out of the dust (as I may say), even from among them of low degree; if they had then answered what the Lord expected and required of them in their day, whether they should have

been continued by him in their dominion or no, and whether you should have had this day of trial, which it has pleased the Lord now to afford you?

The day of power and government, which the Lord had given you formerly, was manifestly by his providence come to an end; and whether ever you should have a day more, was very doubtful. All your councils and strength availed nothing, save only to make the work more difficult, if not at length almost impossible. And now the Lord was busy in trying several sorts of these, what they would do for his name. And truly this I may say concerning them all (though I would not reproach any), that they did not answer the expectation of the Lord. But this I leave to you to consider, Whether, if they had answered the expectation of the Lord, and done what his soul delighted in, and what in part they promised, whether the Lord would have continued them in authority or no. I propose this, that you may take notice upon what ticklish terms you then stood, as to your future hopes, and how easily your authority and greatness might have been forever buried, and that which was lately uppermost have continued so, if it had seemed good unto the Lord; that so you may be sensible of what the Lord has done in relation to you, and pray that you may walk worthy of it, making use of it in the fear of his name, who has all still in hand, and can still do what he pleases in this nation. Indeed he can yet bring down whom he will, and he can yet set up whom he will; and what he will do, you know not; but in the fear of his dreadful name, and in holding your standing out of self-confidence (because of your present strength) is your safety.

### QUERY III

If you do not certainly know what was the cause of the Lord's former displeasure against you, and of his so sore afflicting you, but shall err in judgment, and set up the same things again, which the Lord then put forth his hand to throw down, and also endeavor to crush and suppress that which the Lord then made way for the growth of, whether this will not endanger your overthrow from the hand of the Lord?

Sure I am, the Lord is able to overturn you as easily as he overturned them that were in power before you. *What is man to the Lord? What is his flesh to the Lord's Spirit?* What great tree could stand before the late vehement wind (where the Lord gave it power); which was terrible and dreadful, tearing up by the very roots? which might be a figure and warning where the Lord gives eyes to read. After you have done all you can, even made laws as strong as you can, and put them in the strictest course of execution you can, one night from the Lord may end the controversy, and show whether we please the Lord in obeying him, or you in making laws against us for our fidelity and obedience to him.

And as the Lord is able to overturn you, so if you mistake your work, misinterpreting the passages of his providence, and erring in heart concerning the ground of his former displeasure; and so (through the error of judgment) set yourselves in opposition against him, replanting the plants which he will not have grow, and plucking up the plants of his planting; do you not in this case provoke the Lord, even to put forth the strength which is in him against you? We are poor worms. Alas, if you had only us to deal with, we should be nothing in your hands! But if his strength stand behind us, we shall prove a very burdensome stone, and you will hardly be able to remove us out of the place wherein God has set us, and where he pleases to have us disposed of. And happy were it for you, if instead of persecuting us, you yourselves were drawn to wait for the same begettings of God (which we have felt) out of the

earthly nature, into his life and nature, and did learn of him to govern in that; then might you be established indeed, and be freed from the danger of those shakings and overturnings which God is hastening upon the earth.

Now because you may be apt to think, that I write these things for my own sake, and the sakes of my friends and companions in the truth of God, that we might escape the sufferings and severity which we are like to undergo from you; and not so mainly and chiefly for your sakes, lest you should bring the wrath of God and misery upon your souls and bodies; to prevent this mistake in you, I shall add what follows. Indeed this is not the intent of my heart; for I have long expected, and so still expect, this cup of outward affliction and persecution from you, and my heart is quieted and satisfied therein, knowing that the Lord will bring glory to his name, and good to us out of it: but I am sure it is not good for you to afflict us for that which the Lord requires of us, and wherein he accepts us; and you will find it the bitterest work you ever went about, and in the end will wish that the Lord had rather never given you this day of prosperity, than that he should allow you thus to make use of it. Now that you may the more clearly see the temper of my spirit, and how my heart stands in this thing, I shall a little open unto you my faith and hope about it, in these ensuing particulars.

First, I assured in my heart and soul, that this despised people (called QUAKERS) is of the Lord's begetting in his own life and nature. Indeed, had I not seen the power of God in them, and received from the Lord an unquestionable testimony concerning them, I had never looked towards them; for they were otherwise very despicable in my eyes. And this I cannot but testify concerning them, that I have found the life of God in my owning them; and that which God has begotten in my heart refreshed by the power of life in them; and none but the Lord knows the beauty and excellency of glory, which he has hid under this mean appearance.

Secondly, the Lord has hitherto preserved them against great oppositions, and is still able to preserve them. Every power hitherto has made nothing of overrunning them; yet they have hitherto stood, by the care and tender mercy of the Lord; and the several powers which have persecuted them, have fallen one after another.

Thirdly, I have had experience myself of the Lord's goodness and preservation of me, in my suffering with them for the testimony of his truth, who made my bonds pleasant to me, and my noisome prison (enough to have destroyed my weakly and tender-educated nature) a place of pleasure and delight, where I was comforted by my God night and day, and filled with prayers for his people; as also with love to, and prayers for, those who had been the means of outwardly afflicting me and others upon the Lord's account.

Fourthly, I have no doubt in my heart that the Lord will deliver us. The strength of man, the resolution of man, is nothing in my eye, in compare with the Lord. Whom the Lord loves he can save at his pleasure. Has he begun to break our bonds and deliver us, and shall we now distrust him? Are we in a worse condition than Israel was, when the sea was before them, the mountains on each side, and the Egyptians behind pursuing them? He indeed that looks with man's eye, can see no ground of hope, nor hardly a possibility of deliverance; but, to the eye of faith, it is now nearer than when God began at first to deliver.

Fifthly, It is the delight of the Lord, and his glory, to deliver his people, when to the eye of sense it seems impossible. Then does the Lord delight to stretch forth his arm, when none else can help; and then does it please him to deal with the enemies of his truth and people, when they are lifted up above the fear of him, and are ready to say in their hearts concerning them, *They are now in our hands; who can deliver them?*

Well: were it not in love to you, and in pity (in relation to what will certainly befall you, if you go on in this course), I could say in the joy of my heart, and in the sense of the good-will of my God to us, who allows these things to come to pass, *Go on; try it out with the Spirit of the Lord; come forth with your laws, and prisons, and spoiling of our goods, and banishment, and death* (if the Lord please), *and see if you can carry it.* For we come not forth against you in our own wills, or in any enmity against your persons or government, or in any stubbornness or refractoriness of spirit; but with the Lamb-like nature which the Lord our God has begotten in us, which is taught and enabled by him both to do his will, and to suffer for his name's sake. And if we cannot thus overcome you (even in patience of spirit, and in love to you), and if the Lord our God please not to appear for us, we are content to be overcome by you. So the will of the Lord be done, says my soul.

### POSTSCRIPT

O dear friends, hearken to the voice of the love of my heart, which speaks thus unto you! Oh wait, wait to feel something of God, something of his divine life and power stirring in your hearts, and travel, in the light and leadings of it, out of the earthly nature, leaving the corruption of man behind, which makes you miserable, and putting on the holiness and righteousness of the nature of God day by day, which will make you happy, as you are made partakers of it! Yes, do but come into the power of that religion which you yourselves profess, not so much minding the outward form (for it is not of so much value), and you shall find that we shall agree in religion sooner than you are aware. Now if in your hearts you shall ask me, what it is to come into the power of that religion which you yourselves profess, I shall appeal unto your own souls whether it be not this; even to forsake the devil and all his works, taking up the cross unto your own hearts' lust and corrupt ways, and under this cross (wherein is the power of God felt by them that mind it, and wait upon God there with humble and subject spirits) to fight the battles of Christ against temptations to sin, and the soul's enemies, even until death. Here (if you will enter at this narrow gate, and walk on in this strait way unto the kingdom, into which flesh and blood cannot enter, but the selfish nature and earthly spirit must be left behind) in this religion, which is indeed the substance of all true religion, we can readily meet and unite with you. But if you will set up a form to stop the power and progress of the Spirit of the Lord in the hearts of his people in this nation, and not mind the power of religion yourselves, but with vehemency go about to force others to your form (which you cannot truly say is of God, but of man), in this we cannot close with you, but must be content in the will of God to suffer under you, the time which the Lord has allotted, which you cannot go beyond. And blessed forever be the name of the Lord our God, who has made us acquainted with that life and power which was before all forms and ways of religion and worship of man's inventing, and which will be after them; and who has hitherto borne up our spirits in the testimony which he has given us to bear to his living truth and worship, and who we doubt not will yet bear us up, even to a conquest in his Spirit over all that he has called us forth to testify against. And that great city, or building of religion, which is built up by man's wisdom, and maintained by man's strength, we are sure is falling, and shall fall throughout all the earth; yes, man's striving to re-edify



and re-establish it, will but make the ruins thereof more speedy and more dreadful. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it, both in the Scriptures of Truth, which cannot be broken, and in the hearts of many of his servants, in this day of his appearance in Spirit to those, the eyes of whose spirits he has opened, and by whom he has given a visit and warning to the earth, which the earthly ear cannot hear, but will be overtaken and surprised with the day of the Lord. And oh, what running and seeking will there be to the rocks, and hills, and mountains, for a hiding place from the wrath of the Lamb! but none will be then found. O miserable, earthly-spirited man! (who has passed away your time in a dream, and have little minded or regarded the salvation of your soul, or considered what your present vain pleasures and courses would tend to) what will you then do? There is a pit prepared for the wicked (I speak not an imagination of mine own; indeed it is the truth of God).

Now the Lord seeks the souls of all lost men, to save them from the pit; but their ears are dull of hearing, their eyes veiled, their hearts grossly fattened and made insensible with the senses and delights of the earthly nature, and the voice of God (with the things that concern their eternal peace, yes, their present welfare also) cannot enter into them: and so they let slip the time of their redemption, and waste away the season of their visitation, hardly ever so much as thinking what will become of them in the end. O Lord my God! awaken your poor creatures, that they may live, and not die: rather let your judgments break forth to awaken them, than that they should thus run on towards utter destruction, even to perish from your life and blessedness, and to be swallowed up in the misery, torment, and wrath due to that nature which they have contracted, and wallowed like swine in. Every nature, principle, and spirit is traveling towards its end. O man! take heed what nature you are of, in what principle and spirit you act, and towards which you travel. And remember that God loves his creature; your destruction is not of him, if you perish; but in him is your help, if you hearken to his voice, and turn at the reproofs of that which he has placed near you, even in your heart, to reprove sin in you, and to beget you into the love and holiness of his life and nature, leavening you into a new man, as you become subject to the checks and leadings thereof. This is pleasing to the Lord; that which proceeds from this, and is performed in this, is the true worship, and not that which man has invented, and with which the earthly nature is quieted and satisfied, but the power of life turns from.

It is the great mercy of the Lord to stop any man in the way of his error, and happy is he that is stopped by him.

### **ANOTHER POSTSCRIPT**

YET one thing, perhaps as my last unto you, let me freely propose; and be not hasty in spirit, but wait on God for skill and ability to weigh the thing aright, and to give an upright answer thereto, as before him, in the secrets of your consciences. It is briefly this: Why may not the power of religion be permitted to flourish under you? Cannot the government of God's Spirit and your government stand together? I beseech you consider it. No man knows how short his time is, nor what is to come after his present determination of things. It is now your day? Oh, that you had the true light to walk by in it, that you might not afterwards repent; and that my heart might be gladdened concerning you, who have so prayed for you, as if I had felt my own soul in your conditions!

ISAAC PENINGTON

# A SALUTATION OF LOVE AND TENDER GOODWILL

TO THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE PEACE FOR THE COUNTY OF BUCKS, AND SUCH OTHERS  
IN THAT COUNTY, AND ALSO THROUGHOUT THE NATION, AS ARE CONCERNED IN  
THE CONTENTS HEREOF.

[no date]

IF I should warn you of the day of the Lord (which is a day of terrible wrath to the transgressing nature, but of peace, love, and tender mercy to the righteous, innocent, suffering seed); if I should tell you that this day is hastening upon this nation, and upon the whole earth; and if this should affright you, and cause you to cry unto the Lord to deliver you from that nature, and from those sinful courses, which make you but fit fuel for his fire in the day of its hot burning, — I say, if by this means you should be thus prepared for this day, and yet this day comes not so suddenly as you might expect; yet that would be no loss, or cause of grief unto you. But if this day should suddenly come, and find you in your sins, and so the fierce wrath of the Lord break in upon and afflict your souls, and the day of your mercy and redemption be wholly passed over by you; this would be matter of unutterable grief and sorrow to you, and the remembrance of your former ease and pleasures would but increase the sense and anguish of your misery.

Certain I am, there is a day of giving account for sinning against God, and for oppressing that in your consciences which discovers to you, and checks you for, your sins. And this will as certainly come, as the day of sinning now is; and then every man must receive from God according to his works, and reap the fruit of the deeds done in the body; then every soul must inherit according to its nature, and every vessel be filled with what it is fitted to receive: that which is fitted for mercy, with mercy; that which is fitted for wrath and misery, with wrath and misery; and then the distressed sinner will wish, *Oh that I had an hour to escape! Oh that God would once more give me a moment of repentance, and of turning from sin!*

Oh consider! is it a slight thing with you that the infinite God, who is little concerned in you (being perfectly blessed and happy forever without you; but as his love, mercy, and tender nature, makes him concern himself about the salvation of your souls), should give you so large a space of repentance, and so many discoveries of the evil of your ways (when at any time you are retired and serious), and so many checks and warnings in your hearts, as the vilest of sinners, at times, have more or less from God? Can you lengthen out the day of mercy? Can you limit God how long he should strive with you? Oh! why do you harden your hearts? Why do you hearken to the lusts, desires, temptations, and counsels of the earthly mind, whose counsel has undone all that have listened thereunto?

There is no way of avoiding the eternal insupportable wrath of God, but by traveling out of that nature, spirit, and course which it is to. Him that sowed to sin and corruption under the law, the sacrifices would not save then; nor him that sows to sin and corruption under the gospel, the sacrifice of Christ will not save now; but he that is saved by Christ must be sanctified and redeemed from sin and

corruption by him; which Christ works by his principle of life sown in the heart; which principle turns against the contrary principle, discovering its nature, and dark, evil ways, and drawing from, and leading out of them. Oh! therefore let me in love entreat you all, my dear countrymen (indeed I have no end in it but your good), to mind that in your hearts which discovers your evils to you; that therein you may feel the power of life drawing you from them, and helping you against them. Greater is the power in this than the power that is in the contrary principle; as those that hearken to it, and become subject, by experience feel. And what if you lose a few fond pleasures for the present (which indeed are beneath the true state of a man), you will lose a great deal of misery too, and your gain at last will be exceeding great.

If you would know whether I speak truth in these things, come to the true balance, and wait on the Lord, till by him you be made able to weigh. My meaning is, join to the good Spirit of the Lord, when you find it stirring in your own hearts; give up unto it, let in its strength upon you, in its warmth and drawing virtue; give up to forsake the evil, and pursue the good: fear not the multitude of evils in the heart, nor the long accustomedness unto evil; the Lord will help the willing soul out of them. And in this obedience to the good Spirit of the Lord, there will be an understanding received to know the things of God, and to try words and sayings, whether they be of him, or of man. And he that tries in this balance cannot be deceived (the measure being equal and just, and proper to the things which are therewith to be measured); whereas the wisest of men, trusting either to their own understandings and judgments, or to the judgments and understandings of others, are liable to be deceived; and then you will acknowledge what love this sprang from, and what light and life it sprang up in, though through a weak and contemptible vessel.

ISAAC PENINGTON.

### **CONCERNING PEACE AND GOOD-WILL.**

THE true peace is in the new nature, which puts an end to the warring and fighting spirit inwardly, and turns the whole strength of the battle against the enemies of the soul. In the old nature there are lusts after dominion, and after liberty to the flesh, and fulfilling the self-will of the earthly mind; but these are all brought down in the renewed spirit, by the power, love, and sweetness of the gospel of peace. Here is indeed uprightness of heart to the Lord, quietness of spirit under whatever the Lord allows to be, and goodwill towards all men; waiting on the Lord for his seasons of tender bowels, with strong cries and tears, even for those, who, to the eye of man, may seem so hardened against God and his truth, as to be out of the reach of mercy.

# A WEIGHTY QUESTION PROPOUNDED TO THE KING AND BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

TOGETHER WITH SOME QUERIES ABOUT RELIGION

FOR THE GOOD OF MEN'S SOULS

THAT THEY MAY SEEK AFTER, AND BE ESTABLISHED IN, THAT WHICH GIVES LIFE.

[1663]

QUESTION

*Whether laws made by man, in equity ought to extend any further than there is power in man to obey*

Is it not cruel to require obedience in such cases, wherein the party has not a capacity in him of obeying?

Now in things concerning the worship of God, wherein a man is limited by God, both what worship he shall perform, and what worship he shall abstain from, here he is not left at liberty to obey what laws shall be made by man contrary hereunto.

The New Testament worship is to be in Spirit and Truth; which is a principle above man's reason, and cannot rightly be limited by a lower principle; but the lower principle in every man should be subjected to the higher, both in himself and others.

These things I write, not in pride or conceitedness, but with a humble heart, and in love; that God may have his due, Caesar his, and all men theirs; and that wrath from God may not break forth upon this nation; for surely it cannot but greatly provoke him, to see his people so deeply suffer for their obedience to him in what he requires of them.

I am a lover of peace, truth, and righteousness, and a hearty desirer of the welfare and prosperity of this nation; and that it may not more be broken up in the wrath and indignation of the Lord; but that the peaceable and righteous seed, which he has sown in the hearts of many, may be quietly allowed to grow up, to the praise of the Lord, and to the good of mankind.

This is from one, who was a mourner over you in your affliction, and is now also a mourner over those whom you afflict.

I. P.

## SOME QUERIES ABOUT RELIGION.

Query 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 of the nature of this world, which a man by natural parts and industry may attain to, as well as other things?

Query 2. *What is the sum and substance of the true religion?* Is it not love from a principle 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 to 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?

Query 3. Are the Papists, 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 not set up their several forms, and maintain them in wrath and enmity against each other? No, would they not destroy each other, if they could? Surely this spirit is in too many of them! And does not this give a strong evidence against their religion, that it has but a form, and not the true power in it, and that in heart they are not the disciples of Christ? For if they were such, they would of him learn the love.

Query 4. Whether any form of religion (if not held in the power, 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 can allow 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? And this is for lack of power within, and because of forms forcibly set up without: 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 renting of the Protestants from the Papists was no further good than it was in the power of the life; and the renting of others from the Protestants was no further good, than it was begun and held in the same power: no, any party, though beginning ever so uprightly, and by ever so true and clear a leading of the Spirit of God; yet so soon as it begins to invent and turn aside to a form of its own choosing, and is upheld by the reasonings and understandings of men, it presently corrupts.

Query 5. Whether the power of religion (and the true love) if it were raised up and restored again, would make the world happy, and set every thing 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 an inward principle of life? But sense left to itself, without the guidance of reason, how brutish is it! And reason left to itself, without the guidance of a principle of life, falls below sense. How cruel, how blind, how selfish, how unrighteous is 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 thereof!

Query 6. Whether God will restore religion again in the power? Whether he has such a work to do in the world? And whether the time be near that God is about such a work? And whether he has already begun it, and made any progress in it? Is there such a thing as the power of religion sought after? Do

men grow weary of their forms of worship, and find them empty, and unsatisfactory to the hungry soul, that pants after life? No, have there not been some touches and appearances of life and power, and of the true love, in some poor, weak, despised ones? Oh that men knew the times and seasons, and then perhaps they would see that this is not a day for setting up of forms, but of longing and crying out after life and power!

Query 7. When God restores religion, and raises it up in power, whether then forms and ways of worship, without the power, must not needs 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 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 the man, with 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 moulder and come to nothing, and 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 hearts of his 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, where man was at first, from which he came, out of which he departed, and can never be happy till he return there again; and can never return there 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 the principle of life, as it arises, and is further and further made manifest in his heart, through the grace and mercy of God, which thereby offers its 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 either feels the power of religion, and is renewed thereby, and fitted for God; or contents himself with a form 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 (going out of this world unrenewed and unfitted for God), shall be cut off from God, and lie down in sorrow and anguish of soul, where he will bitterly bewail his mis-spent time, and the losing of his soul's life and happiness, for the enjoying a few days 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 lacks

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. This is the day of God's stretching out his arm to you; oh, slip it not out! for if you do, terrible will the day of your awaking be; and your misery unavoidable and intolerable. And if now the pains of your body be so dreadful to you, what will the tearings 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, into the nature and life of his Spirit; that your soul (at present separated from God, and drowned in the earth) may return to, and be happy in, the center of life, from which it came. For there is a center of souls, as well as of the earthly nature; and *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 *garner*. 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 mis-spent time, to increase the heat and flames of the fire. Oh! where is the soul, that, if it were not wholly 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 lose thereby the inward enjoyment of peace and reconciliation with God here, and of the pleasures of his kingdom of true glory afterwards.

Now for a close, let me say one word (in the upright love, and true good-will of my heart) to this present generation, that they may consider and take heed (if possible); it is this:

Even as a father after the flesh is tender to the children he begets according to his nature, and would not allow them to be wronged or destroyed if he could help it; so is the Lord tender of those whom he begets in the nature of his life, and in his due season will appear for them, as surely as he is God, and as surely as he has begotten them out of the worldly nature unto himself, by the Spirit and power of his life. Therefore, oh! touch not any whom the Lord has in the least measure anointed with his holy oil! For what is done unto the least of these *poor, naked, sick, imprisoned ones*, &c, he looks upon as done unto himself; because he is one with them in the sufferings of their flesh, whom he has made one with himself in Spirit.

## **CONCERNING THE PERSUASIONS OF REASON AND FAITH IN MATTERS OF RELIGION**

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; which, how certain or infallible soever it appear to him, yet 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, which opens and manifests the things of the Spirit, unto that

mind which is begotten and renewed by it. And this persuasion is certain and infallible, however it may be struck at and battered, by the reasonings of the wise earthly part, even in that very man whose heart is thus persuaded, by the light of the Spirit of God, concerning the things of God's kingdom.

Now the lowest persuasion of faith is higher, and of a more noble nature, than the highest persuasion of reason; because faith is of a higher principle, and of a deeper nature and ground, than man's reason is. But this, because it appears not in man's sphere, but rather out of it, and is contrary to the line and reach of his wisdom, is accounted by him *foolishness and madness*. Thus is the wisdom of God (and the children thereof) judged and condemned by man in this day.

And how can it be otherwise? How can the wisdom of man but judge that as foolishness, whose beauty and excellency is hid from its eye? But this is because the wisdom of man is out of its place, not subjected to the wisdom of God, but exalted above it; therefore (as a curse unto it) is it allowed to lift up itself in its conceitedness against, and so to persecute, the pure wisdom of God and the births thereof, that it might fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken, 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 whole in the line of man's wisdom, reason, and understanding; but that alone that is bruised, broken, and in some measure dashed in pieces, by the inroads of a diviner life and nature. This, in the leadings of that life which has broken it, and in the shinings of the light eternal upon it and into it, may be enabled to take up the cross to the natural part, and to die that death with Christ, which preserves from the second death, with the misery thereof.

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, 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, but alone by the indwelling of the principle of eternal life in it.

For though such may suffer very deeply in this world, from the men of this world (as the subjects and servants to the principle of life have done in all ages and generations), yet their principle will bear them out; in which God will appear to strengthen and refresh their spirits, and carry them up above all their sufferings, in the patience, meekness, and faith of the Lamb. And keeping to their principle they cannot be overcome, but must either live or die conquerors, according to the will and good pleasure of him who orders and disposes of all things well, and brings good out of every evil, in despite of all the powers of darkness. And he that overcomes (whether by life or death) in the Lamb's Spirit, shall wear the Lamb's crown, and sit down in that perfect rest in the kingdom of the Father, which will give the hearts of all his children full satisfaction. In which assured hope (life stirring in our bosoms, and quickening our hearts with love unto God, and zeal for his truth) we can freely give up all that is near and dear unto us in this world, and lay down our heads in inward peace, in the midst of the greatest outward persecution and trouble. Even so, O Lord, your will be done concerning this generation of your people, whom you have begotten to yourself, and brought forth by your mighty power, to testify to your truth in this present day. Dispose of them as it pleases you; and let not their faith in you, nor your faithfulness to them, fail; but let them be a praise to your name throughout all generations; and tendered by you, as the first-fruits of your appearance, in the glorious light of the everlasting day, after



this great, long, thick, and dark night of apostasy from the life and spirit of the apostles, which has so long eclipsed and covered the brightness of your beauty from the sight of the earth.

ISAAC PENINGTON

## **SOME OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM GLANCED AT**

**FOR THE**

**SERVICE OF THE UPRIGHT-HEARTED AMONG SEVERAL SORTS OF PROFESSORS,  
WHO HAVE FORMERLY HAD A FEELING OF MOST OF THESE THINGS IN MEASURE:**

**To which feeling, and that which gave it them, they are hereby allured and invited to return; that the many names and various ways may perish and vanish; and the One Spirit, One Life, One new, living Name and Way may be waited for and pursued after:**

**That so all the Tribes and Families, and several Divisions of ISRAEL may know one another, and heartily unite in one Nature and inward Power of Life, which does good to all, and harm to none, neither inwardly nor outwardly.**

**By a traveler towards the living Substance, and a mourner over the wanderings of the scattered sheep.**

**ISAAC PENINGTON.**

**[1663]**

### **PREFACE**

NONE but Christ, none but Christ, says my soul, from the sense of my continual need of him, and from the deep love of my heart unto him. Now there is a two-fold way of knowing Christ, both which are of use, and have their service in their several seasons, according to the estate and condition of the soul, and according to the dispensation which it pleases God to set up among his people; the one whereof is literal, the other spiritual; the one is according to a description of him received into the understanding; the other is according to the revelation or unveiling of him in the heart. As for instance, Christ may be preached as light, as life, as power, as the eternal Word and wisdom of the Father, etc. Now the receiving the knowledge of these things merely into the understanding, is a receiving and knowing Christ according to the letter, or according to a literal description of him; and the receiving of any of these things in the living sense and shinings of the eternal light of God in the heart, and so becoming

subject in that life, sense, and power, is a knowing and receiving of them in spirit, and the spiritual submission and obedience of the gospel. This is the excellent way and path of life which God in this last age of the world is making manifest; though the other is not quite laid aside, nor to be rejected or despised, where there is any of the light of life stirring in it. But the main thing now to be minded is the heavenly birth, with God's dispensation of life to it, and its separation from the earthly birth, and its way of feeding on the heavenly things. For Hagar and Ishmael (which are the mother and child after the letter) are now to be cast out; and the seed of promise, with its mother, to abide in the house alone (with the Father of blessings) forever. So that now the separation goes very near and close. The birth that is now raised is very inward and spiritual, even the seed itself; and its food is the life itself, even that which the earthly birth cannot feed on or digest; and the way and knowledge of life is very inward and spiritual, to cut off the earthly nature and spirit in its closest insinuations and transformings. The Lamb, in his appearances in this day, is very hidden and retired; and none can see his paths, and follow him, but such as receive of his present ointment, and feel the guidance of the opening of his eye in them. The Lord is bringing about great things, both inwardly and outwardly; happy are they whose hearts and spirits are prepared for them: for great misery, death, and destruction are coming upon the earthly, and great joy and blessedness are breaking up in, and showering down upon, the heavenly; which that all souls that have the breath of life in them, and that pant after the living God, may partake of, is the earnest desire of my soul.

## **SOME OF THE MYSTERIES etc.**

### **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 of his life unto his creatures.

Question 2. How does Christ convey life?

Answer. As the living Word; as the promised seed. He sows the seed of the kingdom in the heart, in which is life: and as he makes way for this to spread and grow up in and leaven the vessel, even so he quickens and gathers into his life. Again, he is the enlightening word, the quickening 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 saving of the soul from it.

Question 3. 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 4. How is this Word received?

Answer. By faith in the virtue which flows from it. Its nature 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 in the heart's believing, and being persuaded against that which the light discovers to be evil, and won to that which it shows to be good, the word is thus far received, and a foundation of union between it and the soul laid. And so, on the other hand, in the rejecting or turning from any thing that comes from Christ in the heart, Christ is rejected and turned from.

Question 5. 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 not to hearken and become subject thereto.

Question 6. What hinders union with Christ?

Answer. The strong man armed, whom he comes to dispossess; who does what he can to blind the eye from seeing the lovely nature of Christ, and to harden the heart against his visits and appearances.

Question 7. How may the soul be helped against him?

Answer. Receiving the truth in the love, and giving up the heart in the virtue that flows from Christ in his visits and appearances, brings in that strength into the soul which conquers him. He is not able to stand before the power of Christ; which power is the soul's 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 the faith, even in the weakest, he 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 corner-stone, the topstone, of this city or building is Christ. He therefore that would know Christ, and be built upon Christ, must find a holy thing revealed in his heart, and his soul built thereon by him, who alone can raise this building, who 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 on in.

Now he which can find any thing of God built up in his heart (yes, if he can find but the beginning of the true sanctuary), he may also find Christ ministering there; even the true high-priest offering up the sacrifices, and interceding with the Father; as also giving the soul the food of the holy things to eat of. Now this is the way of Christ indeed; namely, in his begettings in the heart, in his presence there, in his ministrations there, between the soul and the Father. And he that thus knows him, even in that which is begotten of 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 it knows not, and will not hear, but by the instinct of life turns from it. So that 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 which the earthly wisdom is easily entangled in. 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 of. 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 nought *all that is* in him, that no flesh might glory in his presence, nor no man be able to boast before the Lord of the salvation of his soul.

## CONCERNING REPENTANCE

Question 1. WHAT is repentance?

Answer. It is Christ's turning of the heart from the dead nature, and from the dead works, towards the living principle, and the living works thereof.

Question 2. Cannot a man turn from sin, and turn to God when he will?

Answer. No; man is a captive, his understanding captive, his will captive; all his affections and nature in captivity; and nothing can turn him towards God, but that which is stronger than that power which captivates him.

Question 3. 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, who gives it in its enlightening and drawing virtue, wherein sin's nature is opened, and the bent of the soul by him secretly turned against it.

Question 4. What is the heart turned from, and what is it turned towards?

Answer. From one nature to another, from one principle to another, from one spirit to another, from one course to another, from one end to another.

Question 5. Is repentance wholly given, or perfected, at first?

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 discovered daily more and more, and the loathing and detesting of it increased, as the new nature gathers strength in the mind, increases in the light and power of life.

Question 6. Is there never to be any reconciliation or turning back to sin?

Answer. No; but a further removing and separation from it; which separation is eternal, even as the beginning of it is in an eternal nature. The seed, at its first appearance and springing up, shuts out sin, as being of a contrary nature to it; and the stronger it grows, the more it shuts sin out: and where it

wholly leavens and possesses the creature, it wholly expels the old leaven, and leaves no place for it to re-enter. This is perfect salvation, where there is no turning back to folly any more, but a perpetual abiding in the nature of the eternal wisdom.

Question 7. What if there be a committing of sin after one is turned from it?

Answer. The repentance is not there perfected; the enemy is not there 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 still in a degree of captivity under the power of the enemy: yet if the bent of the heart be 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.

Question 8. But is there any sin where there is no law? What makes sin but the law? When a man has traveled through the law into the eternal nature, can he then commit sin?

Answer. Where there is no law, there can be no transgression; but while any of that nature remains to which the law naturally belongs, there may be sin and transgression. Now that only is capable of being out of the reach of the law, whose nature is perfect, and which comprehends and cannot but bring forth the righteousness of the law in it. That therefore which falls short of the righteousness of the law, and pleads it is not sin to it, is in the deceit and error from the perfection, and not in the perfect righteousness, which eternally comprehends and brings forth the righteousness of the law; but is not comprehended or judged by it, because its nature, life, and righteousness is above it.

## **CONCERNING FAITH**

Question 1. 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 quickening 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 2. By what means is faith wrought?

Answer. By the Word in the heart; by the living 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; yes, and which works it in all those in whomsoever it is wrought; though they may not know what works it: yes, this is the seed of life, from which every spiritual thing springs and grows in the heart.

Question 3. How is faith received?

Answer. In the quickening 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 quickening virtue faith flows into the soul. For in the death of sin, in the dead state, there is nothing but unbelief; faith therefore must needs flow from the quickenings of life.

Question 4. 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 in 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 to sin, creature, self, or any thing as it stands out of God. Indeed faith is the natural sucker-in of the breath of life, and the purger-out of the breath and power of death.

Question 5. Wherein does faith stand?

Answer. In that wherein 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 quickenings and nourishment of that life from which it sprang.

Question 6. But does not God withdraw? Does not the power often clap in? Where is faith then?

Answer. There is the secret presence of the power, when it is not visibly manifest, enabling the soul to keep to, and depend upon, that which is not seen, but trusted in, though unseen, and not sensibly felt: and there is a secret turning from, and resisting of temptations, and a secret overcoming (the heart being kept true and entire to the Lord) while the enemy seems sensibly to prevail and overcome.

Question 7. Why does the enemy so assault with unbelief, and fight so stiffly against the faith of the soul?

Answer. Because all depends upon it. Stop that, he stops all; overcome that he overcomes all. If that stand and abide in strength, he gains nothing; but loses by every temptation and seeming victory; for faith gets ground and advantage not only by a temptation, but also by a fall.

## **CONCERNING HOPE**

Question 1. WHAT is hope?

Answer. The expectation of something from the Lord, in the season of his good-will. The expectation of the crown of life at last; the expectation of deliverance from snares and temptations at present; the expectation of receiving his promises of the divine nature, or of any mercy or blessing which he has given to pray for; this is hope.

Question 2. What are the grounds of hope to the soul?

Answer. There are manifest and visible grounds, or a secret and invisible ground.

Question 3. What are the manifest and visible grounds?

Answer. They are many, and of various kinds. The Lord's love manifested to the soul; the Lord's promises made to the soul particularly, or generally to that condition wherein the soul is; the soul's experience of the Lord's helping it in former distresses; yes, the very tender nature of the Lord towards souls, and their descent from him, notwithstanding their present alienation and corrupt estate, is a ground of hope, where the Lord quickens it to the heart.

Question 4. What is the invisible or secret ground of hope?

Answer. That cannot be discerned which is secret and invisible; but yet there is sometimes a hope in the heart, when it is not perceived, which is maintained and fed by the invisible life, which is hid there.

Question 5. What is the nature and proper effects of hope?

Answer. It stays the mind, even in the midst of storms and tempests, that they do not overturn, overwhelm, and sink the soul. It keeps up the head above the many waters, and keeps the heart from utterly fainting. It preserves life in the many famines and strait sieges of the enemy. Hope of relief keeps from yielding to the enemy, and preserves from distrusting the Lord. Distrust cannot enter and prevail, where hope abides. Hope adds strength to the soul in its pursuit of all that is good, and in its flying from and eschewing all that is evil, and is the succorer of faith in the needful hour: yes, how often would the faith be given up and foiled, were it not for the hope which relieves it!

## **CONCERNING LOVE**

Question 1. 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 in 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 fulness. But how can I proceed to speak of it! Oh that the souls of all that fear and wait on the Lord might feel its nature fully! and then would they not fail of its sweet, overcoming operations, both towards one another, and towards enemies. The great healing, the great conquest, the great salvation is reserved for the full manifestation of the love of God. His judgments, his cuttings, his hewings by the word of his mouth, are but to prepare for, but not to do, the great work of raising up the sweet building of his life, which is to be done in love, and in peace, and by the power thereof. And this my soul waits and cries after, even the full springing up of eternal love in my heart, and in 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 tinctured by the vessel, but perfectly tincture and change the vessel into its own nature; and 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 takingly does it behave itself in every condition, upon every occasion, to every person, and about every thing! How tenderly, how readily, does it help and serve the meanest! How patiently, how meekly, does it bear all things, either from God or man, how unexpectedly soever they come, or how hard soever they seem! How does it believe, how does it hope, how does it excuse, how does it 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 miscarriages! It never overcharges, it never grates upon the spirit of him whom it reprehends; it never hardens, it never provokes; but carries a meltingness and power of conviction with it. This is the nature of God; this, in the vessels capacitated to receive and bring it forth in its glory, the power of enmity is not able to stand against, but falls before, and is overcome by.

### **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 every thing, through the virtue of the principle of life revealed within, this is the obedience of faith. This is the obedience of the seed, conveyed into the creature by the seed, and it is made partaker of the seed. He is the son who naturally does the will; he is the faithful witness who testifies concerning the will; yes, and he is the choice servant also.

Mark how every thing 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 leaf and line whereof speaks of him, and writes out him in some or other of his sweet and beautiful lineaments. So that if I should yet speak further of other things, as of meekness, tenderness, humility, mercy, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, contentedness, &c. (all which I had much rather should be read in his book, even in the living book of the eternal Word, than in my writings), I should but speak 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 from words, therefore can I not but cut short and pass over these openings in me, that neither my own soul nor others may fix or stay upon words concerning the thing, but may sink in spirit into the feeling of the life itself, and may learn what it is to enjoy it there, and to be comprehended of it, and cease striving to know or comprehend concerning it. And then I am sure he that has a taste of this cannot but be willing to sell all the knowledge that can be held in the creaturely vessel, for that knowledge which is living, and is laid up in that treasury, into which the thief and corrupter can by no means steal or break. Yet something I cannot but further add 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 satisfiedness 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 a 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 is likewise 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, says my God." Oh, the trouble and perplexity of the sinner, when the light of God's Spirit makes his heart and ways manifest to him! yes, and that soul also, which in its day of visitation pants after the Lord, and is willing to give up to the guidance of his light, and waits for the directing and redeeming power of his Spirit; yet oh, what a bitter war, noise, and tumults does the enemy raise within! How does it disturb every step of his way, and strive to darken every drawing, motion, and leading of the soul out of his dominion! But as the redemption is felt, the snares broken, the life manifested, and the soul feels itself entered into the nature and obedience of it; 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 long felt the bitterness and misery of its separation, begins to feel his love, and its union with him, in his letting of it forth into the heart, and its assurance of his goodness, righteousness, power, wisdom, and salvation, oh, how is it filled with joy and delight in the earnest of its portion! Now says it, in the strength of life, My soul rejoices in God my Savior; for he has regarded my low estate, his bowels have rolled towards me, his dayspring from on high, and his mercies from beneath, have 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, who has touched me, won my heart, undertaken for me, and what can separate? He has tied the knot himself, and what can break it? And how can my heart but rejoice in his name over all my fears, false reasonings, doubts, and misgivings, which long held me captive, and withheld my eye from reading love, the which was written both in his heart, and in his dealings towards me?

## **CONCERNING LIBERTY**

LIBERTY is the enlargedness of the heart in the Spirit of the Lord, wherein it has scope 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 the power and freedom of the new life therein, and are thereby perfectly out of the reach of that, which (let into the mind) has power to captivate and intrall. Therefore it is not all manner of scope and latitude, wherein the true liberty consists; but in the scope and latitude proper to its nature. And thus the infinite and unlimitable One is limited (if it be proper so to express it), even within the limits and bounds of his own nature and Spirit, which he cannot transgress, or in any wise consent to do what is contrary thereunto.

## **CONCERNING PRAYER**

PRAYER is the breath of the living child to the Father of life, in that Spirit which quickened it, which gives it the right sense of its needs, and suitable cries proportionable to its state, in the proper season thereof. So that mark: prayer is wholly out of the will of the creature, wholly out of the time of the creature, wholly out 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 1. 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 2. 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 3. 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 becoming all in it.

Question 4. 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 5. How does the seed appear and manifest itself, and how is it given up to in the faith?

Answer. It does appear in its own light and quickening virtue, which discovers the darkness and death of sin, and draws the heart, which it makes willing, out of it. Now its drawings being felt, it is well known, the thing required by it made manifest, there is a faith herein 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 damp this light of faith, and betraying into the unbelief.

## **CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION**

Question 1. 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 2. 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 thereto, and the proper justifier or condemner of him therein.

Question 3. But is not man in a fallen state? And can he so obey God in any thing 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 (for Christ's sake) issuing forth towards mankind in general, wherein there goes forth a quickening life, and a secret, hidden virtue, which gives ability to the hearts which the Lord makes willing to follow his drawings. And this dispensation 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 everywhere; but nowhere of God, whose delight is to save, and not to destroy, his creature, under every dispensation of his life.

Question 4. But many men do not know Christ, and how can they obtain justification by him?

Answer. There is a double knowledge of Christ; outwardly, by a relation concerning him, and inwardly, by feeling the virtue of his nature. Now thus many know Christ, who know him not outwardly. They may have something sown, touched, and raised by God, of the nature of Christ in them, and in this they may know the Father, and spring of the same nature, and be gathered in heart into it, and so come within the line or compass of the spiritual life, wherein the spiritual blessings and mercies run and flow through Christ, and for his sake. And so here they may see their sins, and be loaded with them, and feel the life and virtue that washes from them, and that it is in the mere mercy of God, and so be drawn out of self into the nature, life, virtue, and power of Christ, which is conveyed in substance in the inward feeling and new-creating of the heart.

Question 5. How is this justification wrought?

Answer. By faith in the virtue which flows from Christ. God letting in of the nature of his Son into the heart, and begetting therein something of his own likeness, in which he draws, and which he gives to believe in: this faith is imputed by God for righteousness, in every heart wherever it is found; and where this faith in the living virtue is found, there God blots out the iniquities for his name's sake; yes, and remission is felt in that which is made living. And there is one near, who has power to bind or loose in the conscience, according to the nature of the dispensation; and who does bind or loose in every dispensation as he finds cause. But all loosing of sins is for Christ's sake, and through his blood; though every one in every dispensation is not able distinctly so to read it. Yes, under the law, the remission was by this sacrifice; though many of the Jews could not read the type. The promise is to the seed of the kingdom, and to man in the seed; and there it reaches him whenever it finds him; for in all his gatherings into, and being found in, that, he is blessed.

Question 6. Then may a man be justified who never heard outwardly of Christ?

Answer. If he feel the seed of life, be overcome by its nature, give up to its law, as it is made manifest in his heart, abhor the nature and law of sin and death, and thus in soul cleave unto the Lord, and follow him as he pleases to lead, the Spirit and life of the Lord cannot but herein justify him; and the grace and mercy of the Lord cannot withhold giving him out his pardon for his sins past (and also pass by his future frailties), although he distinctly know not how to sue out and plead it. The redemption and pardon of sin is through the unlimited grace of God: which is not restrained to the outward knowledge of the creature, but issues forth according to the capacity that God creates any where to receive it. Life, mercy, grace, pardon, etc. issue forth from God into the vessels of every kind, under every dispensation that he prepares for them: and the inward sense of life is the thing that God aims at in all his dispensations, and not the outward skill or knowledge, but thrusts that by in every dispensation, except as his inward life and virtue is found in it.

Question 7. How is justification by grace?

Answer. No man in his fallen estate can deserve any thing of God. It is of grace that God visits him by any dispensation of his love and mercy. It is of grace that he gives him any ability to turn unto him. It is of grace that he accepts him in turning, giving him a share in the ransom he has found, which is still in God's eye in whatever he does for man, however man may be off from it. Indeed such is the weakness of man, that no man can be justified by the works of obedience that he can perform under any dispensation, but only by the remission and ability which he receives from grace, and wherein alone he can be preserved unto the end by grace. So that in every dispensation it is grace alone that saves (through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ), though from the eye of man this has been very much hidden in various dispensations. Yet, notwithstanding, the broken and humble-hearted ones (who have felt the inward power of life to change their natures, and to preserve them in that which God has begotten in them), the grace prevails to save in every dispensation. For it is not the outwardness of any dispensation, but the virtue let forth from God in the heart, which saves. And by this the Lord can save under any dispensation, and without this there is no salvation in any.

Question 8. What is the righteousness that justifies in the sight of God?

Answer. The righteousness of Christ alone. This 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. Indeed there is also a justification according to the works of the law, or the creaturely obedience, which the Lord will so far own as the creature is able to bring it forth: but it is the obedience of faith which is the pleasure of his soul. And the other can hardly ever be perfect, so as the Lord can spy no fault in it, and may also easily fail, depending upon the brittle nature and spirit of the creature; whereas this is of an abiding nature, having its root not in the creature, but in the seed. Therefore, O all that love life! descend from the outwardness of dispensation into the hidden seed, where we may feel the living God, and all that are in any living dispensation of his life, as the Lord pleases to let our spirits into him, and into one another. And wait for the light and power of this blessed day (which in the tender mercy of the Lord has dawned from on high upon us) which discovers and makes things known, not after the letter of a dispensation, but by manifesting their inward nature, power, and virtue in the endless life, of which Christ is now become the minister in the living

sanctuary in those whose hearts he has new-formed, and dwells in.

## **CONCERNING SANCTIFICATION**

Question. 1. WHAT is sanctification?

Answer. It is the cleansing of the vessel by the Spirit of the Lord, from the pollution both of flesh and spirit.

Question 2. 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 3. 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 thereby the power of the Word enters into the soul, and sheds abroad its living virtue in the soul.

Question 4. What then is chiefly to be minded by the soul, that would 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 there does that which the principle of the law could never do.

## **CONCERNING RECONCILIATION**

Question 1. WHAT is reconciliation?

Answer. It is a bringing together the minds and hearts of God and man into one.

Question 2. How is this wrought?

Answer. By taking away the enmity of man's nature, which is therein against God, and by planting him into, and causing him to grow up in, that nature and life which God loves, whereby that is removed from man which God hates, and which is the cause of separation; and man brought into, and brought up in, that which is the love and delight of God's heart.

Question 3. By what is this reconciliation wrought?

Answer. By the Word of God's power. That 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 thereby cherished, and grows up in its shadow and nourishment.

Question 4. How does the Word work this?

Answer. By winning upon man, and gathering him into its light, out of man's own darkness, exercising man various ways to empty him of himself, and make him weak in himself, and putting forth its own strength in and for man, as it has emptied and weakened him in himself.

Question 5. What then is man's great advantage towards reconciliation with God?

Answer. To become weak, to become poor, to become helpless, to become nothing by the frequent exercises of the word of reconciliation in the heart: for the poor receive the gospel, and the weak receive God's strength, and the helpless his mercy, and the nothing-ones his fulness.

### **CONCERNING REDEMPTION**

Question 1. 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, sown, revealed, grown up, and perfected in the heart.

Question 2. 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 it has prepared.

Question 3. 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 perfectly blotted out, by the presence and indwelling of the new. This is perfect redemption, the least measure whereof is redemption in a degree.

And 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 it, and the pure heart enjoys and is one with it. So that as there is a true entrance into, fellowship in, and enjoyment of, the death of Christ; so is there also of the resurrection and glory of the redeemed life; which is the portion and inheritance which God has prepared for Zion, after her long desolation and sore widowhood; which he will give unto her in the sight of all the world, whereby she shall become the beauty, joy, and praise of the whole earth; who has hitherto been the reproached, despised, and afflicted, and made a prey of, by the several sorts of devouring spirits.

## **A POSTSCRIPT TO PROFESSORS**

THIS I am assured of, that it were an easy matter with the Lord, to give forth a literal description of all the things of his kingdom, so exact, full and natural to the thing, as might 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 this, unless quickened and raised by the immediate power and life of the Father. No, might not the earthly spirit be easily building with this an earthly fabric, which would not come within the measure of the true temple! May I speak freely; I would not deny any thing of God among you, nor be an instrument to quench the least good in any of you; but indeed I have seen, I have felt and known some of your snares; yet have rather spent the strength of my spirit in crying to God for you, that he would break them, and disentangle your souls, than in endeavors to demonstrate and manifest them unto you. And I am now touching at one of them, which is not the meanest; 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. Indeed, this is not the poor one which receives the gospel, and is acquainted with the power and virtue of eternal life. And if the Lord did not teach my soul continually to give up the outward knowledge of every thing, and press after the inward life, I might soon grow wise after the flesh, but lose the fresh oil which supplies 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.

## **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF DEEP CONCERNMENT TO**

### **THE JEWS**

#### **FROM ONE WHO HATH BEEN A WRESTLER AND TRAVELER WITH THE LORD OF LIFE, FOR THE DAY OF THEIR MERCY AND REDEMPTION.**

Question 1. WHETHER the people of the Jews do err in their hearts from the God of their fathers (in this their sore dispersion and final captivity), and are not acquainted with his ways, wherein he would have them walk with him, and wait for his mercy and redemption.

Answer. That there is mercy towards, and redemption for, that poor, scattered, forsaken people, my heart has from my childhood, and does still steadfastly believe.

That there is a way wherein they are to worship the God of their fathers, and wait for his mercy and redemption, is also the belief of my heart.

But whether they do indeed know the Lord their God, and the present path wherein he requires them to walk, and so are brought into the capacity and fitness for the mercy and redemption which is in the heart of the Lord towards them, that I very much doubt of, and in the tender love and good-will of my heart am drawn to propose the consideration thereof to them.

The grounds of this my doubt are chiefly these two:

1. Because their fathers, who had Moses and the prophets to instruct them in the law of the Lord, and in his ways of worship and obedience, yet did err in their hearts from the Lord their God, both under the teachings of Moses and of the prophets. "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways," said the Lord concerning them, upon forty years trial of them in the wilderness. *Psa. 95:10*. And Moses also complained unto all Israel, that notwithstanding all that they had seen done by the Lord in the land of Egypt; and the great temptations, signs, and miracles in the wilderness, yet the Lord had not given them a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day. *Deut. 29:2,3,4*. Neither did they more understand the mind of the Lord by the ministry of the prophets, than by Moses; but misunderstood his way of worship, misunderstood his intent about their sacrifices, and offered up the abomination of his soul; even when they offered up the very sacrifices which he required, as the Spirit of the Lord in the prophets often testified unto them. See *Isa. 1. Isa. 66. Mic. 6. Ezek. 20*. with many more testimonies of the prophets, pleading with them from the mouth of the Lord.

Now if their fathers, in the days of Moses, and in the days of the prophets, when they had certain information from the mouth of the Lord concerning his ways, yet then did err in heart, and did not understand the mind of his Spirit; how much more probable is it that these, in the cloudy and dark day, when the light (that shone upon their fathers) is hid from their eyes, that these may miss of the mind of the Lord, and not understand the way of peace and acceptance with their God.

2. Because the prophets foretell of their idols cleaving to them, and their uncleanness not being removed, but their stubbornness and hardness remaining, until the great and terrible day of the Lord God Almighty, wherein his Spirit shall be poured down from on high, and they visited and redeemed in the light and power thereof. Then shall Ephraim say to his idols, "Get you hence; what have I to do any more with idols?" Yes in that day "shall they cast their idols to the moles and to the bats." *Isa. 2:20*. For the Lord will cleanse them from all their uncleanness, *Ezek. 36:29*. and take away the stone out of their heart, and make their spirits tender towards the God of their fathers; insomuch as Ephraim shall smite upon his thigh, and bemoan his unaccustomedness to the yoke, and eternal law of the Spirit of his God, which he has not understood in spirit, but been blinded about the ordinances of Moses, and testimonies of the prophets.

Question 2. Whether the Jews can possibly meet with the blessings of the Messiah, while their heart errs from the God of their fathers, and they do not know his way.

Answer. It is utterly impossible, while they miss of the path wherein blessedness is to be found, to meet with that blessedness which the path thereof alone leads to. How can the heart, in erring from God, meet with that which is alone to be found in union and walking with him? Have they met with it to this day? Or can they ever meet with it, till they be taught and led of the Lord to walk towards it? Oh that Israel knew the way of life! Oh that their hearts were turned towards their God, that they might no more die, nor be estranged from him like the heathen, but live the life of the blessed, and enjoy an inheritance in the land of the living!

Question 3. Is there any way for Israel to be cured of the error of their heart, that their misknowledge of God and his ways may be removed from them, and they may come to a right understanding, and a clearness of light?



Answer. There is balm in the land of the living, which is able to cure all the diseases and distempers of the dead, and there is a physician who is able to apply it. The God of Israel knows the very core of evil in the heart, and all the issues of death from there, and how to take out the core, and stop all the issues of sin, death, and misery. The Shepherd of Israel understands the lost state, the wandering state, the sick state of every lost soul in Israel, and has skill and remedies to recover and heal them all. Ezek. 34.

Question 4. What way has this skillful physician for the cure of the erring heart of his Israel, and to bring them to an acquaintance with him and his ways?

Answer. He has many, which are able thoroughly to effect it. As:

1. By circumcising their hearts, or by sprinkling clean water upon them to wash away the filth of their hearts. With him is "the fountain of living waters," and with them can he "wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion;" yes, "his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem:" with him is "the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning," wherewith he can search out and judge all the evil in the hearts of his people Israel, and burn it up.
2. By creating a new heart and a new spirit within them. He can not only take away the heart of stone, but he can give a heart of flesh, which shall be sensible and tender to every motion and impression of his Spirit, as the other was dull and hard.
3. He can write his law in their heart, that they may no more read in the oldness of the letter, where life can never be learned (which is to pass away, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof), but in the newness of the Spirit, where the new eye easily reads and understands what God writes in the new heart and mind.
4. He can put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his ways, and to keep the statutes and judgments which God writes in this new book, even the renewed heart; for this is the book of the new covenant, these are the tables thereof, wherein God writes the law of life eternal for his Israel, wherein they are to read, and live forever. And happy is that Israelite who waits for, and receives, the Spirit. To him none of the commandments of life are grievous, being all quickened to him in and by the Spirit. So that the more the Lord writes in his heart, the happier is he; he thereby receiving more of the life and power of God's Spirit, and learning thereby more of his God, and traveling there-through further with him into his purity and divine sweetness.

Question 5. What way is there for Israel to come by this cure?

Answer. None but God's covenant, the covenant which God made with their fathers. Not the covenant of the law by Moses, but the covenant before the law, which was also renewed by Moses, but was not that covenant which God made with them in Horeb, but a covenant besides, as they may read, Deut. 29. Alas, alas! man can never come to life by his obedience; he still falls short there; but by receiving the promised seed, he comes to be heir of the promise with the seed, and finds the obedience of the seed brought forth in him, through the grace and mercy of God, which breaks forth upon his Israel. Oh that the hearts of Israel after the flesh were circumcised to hear this sound! that they might be turned in spirit towards the God of life and salvation, that from him they might receive the seed of life into

their vessels, that their hearts might be purified and made living by the seed, and they might there meet with that, which their fathers could never meet with by the law of Moses; nor indeed is never so to be obtained, but by the promise to their fathers, which was before the law. And this must be the way of their restoration into favor with God; that is, not the covenant which God made with their fathers, when he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, but the covenant by which God writes the law and knowledge of himself in the heart. Jer. 31:32,33.

Question 6. How may Israel come into this covenant with God? Or is there any thing for them to do, that they may enter into it, and reap the blessings of it?

Answer. They must mind the small beginnings of it, and subject to God therein, that they may know its further growth and progress in them. He that withstands the beginning of a thing can never come to the end thereof. Now the blessedness is chiefly in the end; but it is not found and enjoyed but by him that meets with the beginning, and so by degrees travels along till he comes to the end. And here is a great mystery, which the wisdom of man cannot learn or understand; in that, though the greatest blessings are contained in this covenant, yet the beginnings of it are the smallest and most contemptible. The seed of the promise, the seed of the kingdom, is the least of all seeds. Man easily overlooks it; or if he have a little glimmering of it, readily despises it, as unlikely ever to have that in it, or to bring that to pass for the soul, which it desires and expects. Yet there is no other way to the kingdom, but by this seed of the kingdom opening and growing in the heart, and gathering the heart into itself, leavening it (by its spreading) with the leaven of life eternal, and purging out the sour leaven of sin and death. This then is the path of life; you must wait to feel the seed of the kingdom sown in your heart by the good seeds-man, and then wait for your gathering into it, and growth in it; and by your subjection unto it, and its overspreading you with the power of life eternal (which is in it, though hidden from you), you will find sin and death, and the power of hell, vanquished in your heart, and your heart fitted for the God of your life to dwell and appear in, whose dwelling and appearance there will make you completely happy. Only if you would come out of your captivity by the enemy of your soul (whereof your present outward captivity is but a shadow), into the life and rest of your God; take heed of despising the day of small things, or the low voice of your God in your heart; for therein are the beginnings of life. And you must begin at the lowest step that the God of your life chooses for you (and find that wisdom shut out, which would begin or go on otherwise than the Lord sees fit to lead and teach) if ever you enter into the path of life, or walk on therein with your God.

Question 7. How may I know this seed of life, or feel when God begins to sow it in my heart, that I may not turn from the small beginnings thereof, but may find an entrance into this blessed covenant of God with my fathers before the law?

Answer. The word or voice of this seed is nigh you, and it has a living testimony with it for good, and against evil. It has a living sparkling in the heart, whereby it is felt and known by those that wait for its appearance. It naturally turns from the evil and towards the good; and in its moving and appearing in you, it will be turning you towards that which it naturally loves, and from that which it naturally hates. In any such stirring in your heart, there is the beginning of light eternal to shine upon your tabernacle; and by giving up and being gathered into its warnings and motions, you will feel a touch of life, even a quickening and warmth towards good, and a beginning of deadness and disunion with that which is evil. And as this is waited for more and more, it will appear more and more in the seasons it sees fit;

and as it finds entrance into you, so will it lead you into its covenant with its God. Remember, therefore, what Moses said to your fathers concerning the word of this covenant "It is very nigh unto you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." Deut. 30:14. Your fathers never knew the virtue of this covenant, but were drowned in misery for lack of minding it. And if you wert gathered into it, you would meet with circumcision of heart, and the new creation of your mind and spirit, and the writing of the eternal law of life there, and the putting of the Holy Spirit of God into you; all which are contained in this covenant, yes, wrapped up in the very seed thereof, which is (in the Lord's times and seasons) smiting the seed of the evil-doer in the hearts of the sons of men, and striving to gather them out of the disobedient state and nature, into the obedience of the glimmerings of light in their hearts; which becomes a law of life and power in them, as it finds entrance into, and place in, them. Therefore, O you sons of Abraham after the flesh, wait for, know, and believe in the light of this covenant, and give up to be gathered into the holy seed thereof, that you may become his children after the Spirit, in this new covenant, in this living covenant, wherein all that enter live in Spirit and power to the God of Abraham; and not by the works of the law of Moses, but by faith in the living seed, become heirs and inheritors of the promise of eternal life, which is to Abraham and his seed forever.

O poor wandering Jew! wait to hear the cry of wisdom's voice in your streets, discovering unto you, and counseling you against, the evil of your heart and ways, by the Word which is very nigh you, in your mouth, and in your heart. And be won upon by the voice of wisdom; give it your heart, let its power enter into you. Take up its cross, be willing to be bound by it from what your heart would run after, and learn of it to draw in its yoke, that all may be yoked down and subdued in you, which makes you miserable, that you may find a place and honor in wisdom's courts, and be adorned with her ornaments, and partake of her durable riches.

Watch unto that which reproves you in your heart, and watch unto its reproofs, that you may be reformed by it, and transformed into its nature, and then you will become a Jew indeed; even a Jew inward, born of the immortal seed of the divine wisdom.

And be not discouraged, either for lack of light to distinguish between the good and the evil, or for lack of power to turn from the one or to the other, O tender-hearted ones, who find a warmth and a willingness within to give up to the Lord: but wait his season, and hope in his tender bowels, in the midst of all the roarings and cruel usages of the enemy, who will be striving to the utmost to keep his hold of his captive, and to keep it back from traveling out of his dominions of death and darkness, towards the land of life, light, and peace eternal! I have had a very hard travel, and have felt his power and cruelty beyond measure, yet the Lord my God has helped me, and my breathings abound toward the God of my life for his helping hand unto all that are in heart turned towards him, how difficult, intricate, and impossible soever the enemy strives to make the path of life unto them. Oh! remember the mercy of the Lord towards your fathers, who never felt the strength of the love of this covenant, which the Lord is now gathering his spiritual Israel into; how he pitied them, how he forgave them, how he visited them with loving-kindness and mercy time after time! What a stiff-necked people they were when he first chose them! how ready to run a whoring from him, and rebel afterwards! And surely much more is to be forgiven in this covenant, and much more is the help and healing thereof; only let the heart be true to him, according to the virtue and power of this covenant; yes, and wait to receive that also of him; for it is the fruit and blessing of the covenant in which God heals the backslidings of his Israel, and loves them freely. Amen, amen; O Lord God of everlasting and most

tender bowels of compassion, says my soul!

ISAAC PENINGTON.

# **SOME QUERIES CONCERNING THE ORDER AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**[no date]**

Query 1. WHETHER Christ, who is the head, Lord, King, etc. has not appointed a spiritual order and government to be in his church and congregation.

Query 2. Whether a spiritual order and government is not useful, profitable, and necessary, for the well-being and right-managing of this spiritual body and holy society in the faith and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In natural societies, natural government and order is profitable and necessary; and is not spiritual government as profitable and necessary in spiritual societies?

Query 3. Did not Christ give power of government to his apostles and ministers, at the first publication of his everlasting gospel? All power was given him in heaven and in earth; and did not he, who had all power given him, give power to his apostles and ministers, to preach his everlasting gospel to the world, to gather his sheep out of the world, and to watch over them, oversee them, reprove, exhort, admonish, build up in the holy faith, and cut off and cast out that which was unholy, and would dispute against, but not submit unto, the Spirit, life, and power of truth?

Query 4. Did not Christ give them gifts also answerable; spirits of discerning, that they might be eyes to the body; and quick ears that they might hear for the body? For though the Lord has given every one an eye and an ear, as to themselves; yet every one is not made by the Lord an eye or ear unto the body; but this is appointed for, and given to, those to whom the Lord pleases, who has ordered all things wisely, carefully, and tenderly for the good of all.

Query 5. Were there not titles given them suitable to their offices and services in this kind, as pastors or shepherds after God's heart, according to the promise of the new covenant, overseers or bishops, such as watch for the soul; such as were not only to lay the foundation, but also carry on the building even to perfection, even till they were able to present the gathered and quickened souls a chaste virgin to Christ? and were they not to watch against, testify against, and in the power and authority of the Lord to strike at, all that was contrary, and would endeavor to interrupt, overturn, and destroy their

work, which was of, in, and from, the Lord?

Query 6. Whether the body and common members of the churches were not to hearken to these ("He that knows God, hears us." 1 John 4:6); to obey them in the Lord, to submit to this ministry, and their work in it, in the Lord; to receive the word of truth and holy exhortations and admonitions, milked out by these to them from the breast of life. And were not they that did hearken and obey commended? And were not the other that were not subjected, but slighted them, and their ministry and authority, testified against as disorderly and unruly?

Query 7. Were there not some relics of this order and government all along the apostasy, in the true church and ministry thereof? For there has been a church and a ministry all along the apostasy, blessed be the name of the Lord; though not so visible and outwardly glorious, as many (who have erred from the Spirit and way of truth, and are out of the holy understanding) would make it. It is true, the church has been as in a wilderness, desolate, as a woman forsaken, as a widow, bereft of her husband, stripped of her children, her visage marred, her witnesses mourning, nothing of her beauty, former estate, or glory, to be discerned or found out; yet all has been preserved in the root, and there have been some shootings and sproutings of it forth, which have been inwardly felt by that which is of God in the heart, though not outwardly seen by man's eye. Thus the witnesses have had a ministry, have had the testimony of Jesus, even the Spirit of prophecy, all this dark night of apostasy, and in it have spoken mourningly to the world, and to the captivated souls, which that which was of God in his has hearkened to; and there has been a bowing and subjection of spirit in the Lord. Oh read this, and praise the name of the Lord, for his mercy to his in former generations, you who are now gathered into his pure light and living power, from whom the night is past, and on whom the day, the everlasting day spring from on high, is risen!

Query 8. After the apostasy, does not God renew his commission, and send forth his angel (for they are all but one) to preach his everlasting gospel? And does not he give them power to preach to the world, and to gather those, that hear the everlasting voice through them, into holy assemblies, separated in spirit, nature, and appearance from the world? And have they not authority and gifts, as well to build up as to plant? And ought not those that are gathered by them, as well to be subject to the light, Spirit, power, and authority of the Lord in them, as the former to the former ministers of the Lord? Oh that the world knew them! Oh that the world knew the appearance of God in them! Surely then they would bow to the word of truth, and the glorious appearance thereof; and happiness both inward and outward would break forth upon the earth. There would be no misery, sorrow, nor distress in nations, if the dispensations of life from God had but their course in the earth; yes, nations and persons, that are now deadly sick, would soon be healed, did they but eat of the leaves of the tree of life, which are appointed by God for their healing, and can easily heal those wounds, and repair those breaches, which the wisdom or counsels of man cannot heal or repair. And oh, that they that are gathered might keep and be preserved in that sense and subjection, which they had and received from the Lord in the day of their conviction! Oh, how beautiful, how precious, how glorious was the ministry and ministers of God in their eye then! And to those that are still there, they are still precious; and to those that grow there, they are yet more precious. But those that enter into, or are ensnared in another thing, which leads from the true Spirit, lose the sight and sense which they then had, and instead thereof are filled with prejudices and wise reasonings, which to them may seem very strong and undeniable, though truth, and the true spiritual eye, sense, and understanding easily pierces through them, and

preserves those, who abide single in it, to the Lord.

Now against this holy order and government appointed by God, there may arise, in some hearts, some such objections as these following.

Objection 1. But is not this a turning away from the measure of life in a man's own vessel, to another man's measure?

Answer. Waiting on God in his ordinances and appointments, and upon the ministry which he has set up, the measure of life in him teaches; and it is not a turning from the measure, but a subjecting to the Lord in the measure of his life, so to teach and do. The measure of his life taught me thus to do at first, and teaches me to do so still; and will teach so still, all that hearken to it. It did not teach subjection in the apostles's days to the ministry then, and another thing now to the ministry now. But Christ is the same today as yesterday; his life the same, his Spirit the same, its doctrine and teaching the same: and that of God in the conscience within answers the pure voice when it comes to the ear without. If life speak in one vessel, and its voice be not heard or owned by another vessel, the pure ear (in that other vessel) is not at that time open, but there is something there that obstructs. And if the pure ear of the sheep be not open to hear the voice of the Shepherd, but it be accounted strange, it is much if the other ear in that vessel be not opened to hear the voice of the stranger, and to look upon it as the voice of the Shepherd, it agreeing with that, and answering to that, which now goes for the voice of the measure of life in that heart. He that has an ear, let him hear; for it is easy being taken in this snare, and the danger thereof is very great.

Objection 2. Is not the least measure of life in any vessel (if subjected to, waited on, and believed in) sufficient to instruct and build up into a perfect man in God?

Answer. The sufficiency of the grace of God, turned to, and waited upon, there is nothing in my heart either to undervalue myself, or to teach others so to do. Nor when God did appoint a ministry to gather and build up his church, do I believe he did intend therein to undervalue the sufficiency of his grace: yes, I verily believe, that the grace of God, turned and hearkened to, and followed by, any soul in the darkest part of the earth, has sufficiency in it to save, and will save that soul, though there be none outwardly to minister to it, or help it. Yet this I also believe, that as there is a sufficiency in every measure of life to the work God has appointed for that measure; so there is a greater sufficiency in the growth and fuller proportion of life; and the lesser, the weaker, the poor, the afflicted, the babes, are to be helped by the stronger, especially in their darknesses, afflictions, temptations, etc. And so the greater and stronger in the life, Spirit, and power of the Lord, is a strength and blessing to the weaker; which the weaker making use of in the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord (in the sense and benefit of the sweet help and relief which often the Lord pleases to give forth thereby), will find just cause, and be often drawn, to bless the name of the Lord for.

The measure of life in the vessel teaches to subject to the Spirit of the Lord, and his life in others; which the measure of life in any never refuses, but still knows (when awake and living in the vessel) its own, and has, at least, a secret sense of it, and unity with it. But that which pretends to set up the measure of life as a teacher, otherwise than God has appointed, and in opposition to the teaching and ministry which he has appointed, and to his gift in those vessels, which is as well for the building up

the perfecting of the body, as for the gathering; that is another thing in that vessel that does so, than the measure of life; another spirit, another nature, another ear, than that that first heard. And though it seem to cry up the sufficiency of the measure of life, and to plead for that (and perhaps the creature thinks it is really so); yet this is not the intent of the spirit in the vessel, but to cry up itself, and to make its voice go for the voice of the measure of life: and so such err from the faith, the truth, the Spirit, the measure of life, and are in the nature, spirit, and measure of another thing; which is indeed death, though they see it not, but look upon themselves as gloriously living, and abiding in the pure doctrine and principle above others.

Now to help these a little out of the snares and deep entanglements of the enemy, if the Lord please, I would earnestly press the consideration of this upon them. Did not the apostles preach up the measure of life, the grace of God in their day, Christ within, the word of faith nigh in the mouth and heart, the anointing within, its sufficiency to teach all things, etc. And yet did they so preach it as to overthrow the ministry, or the gifts or service either towards them that were without, or them that were within? Had they not power over them in the Lord? Were they not to teach them, to instruct them, to build them up in the holy faith, and also to watch against wolves and devouring spirits, which would strive to enter the flock in sheep's clothing, and, as preachers of righteousness, to make a prey of the innocent life in the upright-hearted, if possible?

Objection 3. But those who have ministered from the Lord, and whose ministry I have felt and owned, and in the distress and affliction of my soul have had recourse to, hoping that they might have a sense of my condition, and give me proper advice; yet they, instead thereof, have turned me to his witness that wounded me, counseling me to wait on the Lord there, and have they not also told us, that if they themselves should turn from the things they have declared, this truth would abide forever; namely, that man is to keep to the measure of life in his particular?

Answer. It is true; a man is to keep to the measure of life in his own particular. They taught this then; they teach it now. We practiced it then; we are to practice it now. In this measure of life we received them then; and in this measure of life (if we abide still in it) we shall receive them now, and feel their growth in the ability, gift, and power of the Lord.

And when any come to them for advice, they are to wait on the Lord, to feel in him their state who come, and to give forth what the Lord gives them; whether words from the Lord to the party concerning his state, or directions to retire in, and wait for, his more immediate appearance in their own measures. For when we feel the presence and mighty power of God in them, we are too apt to look at them, and then a word may come (proper to our estates) to recall us to retire to our measure. And when we feel immediate relief from the Lord, and his appearing to us in our retiredness in our own spirits, then we may be apt to despise the gifts and service of others; and then another *word* may come from them, proper to our state then, to warn us not to despise prophesying, or the gifts, power, and authority of life in others. Now both these are proper, useful, and weighty in their seasons, when given forth by the Spirit of the Lord. Nor are they contradictory one to the other, but subservient in their seasons and places, which that which is of God feels; but that which is erred from God, and joined to another (under a false representation and belief of things) feels not, but finds a seeming difference, and sets them at variance one with another, as if they could not stand together. And this is the false nature, the false spirit, the false appearance of life, which appears as if it were the measure of the pure,

true life, but is not. This is the false woman, the false wisdom, whose heart is as snares and nets, and her hands bands. Whoso pleases God (abiding in the measure of his truth) shall escape her; but the sinner (that departs therefrom) shall be taken by her. Therefore fear the Lord, come to that which first convinced; to the first truth, to the first sense, to the first love, etc., and all these imaginations of the mind, and subtle devices of the enemy, will fly away, and your poor entangled soul be delivered, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler.

If the enemy should directly cry out against God, or his Christ, or his grace, or the measure of his truth, he would easily be espied and turned from. Therefore he teaches to cry up these in a wrong spirit and judgment, and after a wrong manner, to undermine, betray, and lead the heart from that secretly, which openly it would never hear any thing against. Now those that are thus deceived, are exceedingly to be pitied, and their deliverance from their entanglements and captivities to be breathed after, and waited for. For I may say, in truth and upright sense of heart, there are many that look towards Zion, who yet are ignorant of the devices and sleights of Satan, to entangle them in their way; and some are caught in his snares (like foolish birds catching at the chaff, which makes the bigger show, instead of the wheat), losing the substance for a shadow; the life and power in the heart, for a notion and conceit in the brain. And these are wise in their own eyes, so that indeed it is very hard to reach or recover them; yes, much harder than it was at first, because they are become more rooted and settled in the wrong ground (yes, in a worse earth) than they were when they were first reached to by the power of truth. Yet over these there is a deep lamentation, and for these a sore travel, which the Lord God bless and prosper, for their recovery unto that from which, through mistake, they have erred.

Objection 4. If any man has received a gift of ministry, he has received it of the Lord; and its end being to gather to the Lord, they that by it are gathered, are to be delivered up to the Lord, that he (as king, priest, and prophet) may govern, etc.

Answer. The end of the ministry is not only to gather, but also to preserve and build up what is gathered, even to perfection. And the soul being (especially at first, if not for a long time) weak and babish, not so fully acquainted with the measure of life (having had but some touches and demonstrations of it, but not being gathered fully into it, nor rooted and settled in it); I say, the soul in this state, has as much need of the ministry to preserve, direct, and watch over it in the truth, as to gather it out of the world. Therefore the Father, in his tender mercy and love, has appointed those who are grown in his life (and in the power and authority of his Spirit) to oversee, watch over, instruct, and take care of the flock, so as they may give to him an account of their souls; and in their care, diligence, and faithfulness, they are owned and blessed of the Lord; and the other in their holy fear, reverence, and subjection. Now this is right order from God, wherein the safety of the flock consists; but out of this is danger and confusion, which the measure of life teaches to avoid.

Objection 5. But in a case of doubt or difference, which shall be the judge; the measure of life within, or the testimony of others without? Shall I judge as I feel the thing in the measure of my own life? Or shall I submit to others against my own sense and judgment, because I have an esteem of them, as being much above me in the growth, sense, and understanding of truth?

Answer. It is a great matter to judge aright, and to discern and know the measure of truth (the voice, motion, and judgment thereof) from all the enemy's false appearances, and from all the deceits of the



heart. This is most certain; Jerusalem (the heavenly building, the church of the first-born) is at unity with itself. Truth is pure, eternal, unchangeable, always the same; the same in every member, in every vessel, throughout the whole body.

And this I may say concerning its appearance in this our age, Was ever the like unity known and brought forth since the days of the apostles? How has the Spirit been One, the demonstration and testimony of truth One, the doctrine One, the conduct and practices One in us all! Why, or how so? Because we have had our begetting, birth, and teaching from the same life, the same Spirit; the same fountain springing up, and opening in us all, that have been gathered into its nature and power. Now from this fountain, from this spring of life, never issues any thing that is contrary to the life in any. Therefore if there appear a contrariety, there must be a waiting to feel who is erred from, or at least not yet fully gathered into, the measure of life. And such as are of an inferior stature and growth in the body, are (in an especial manner) to watch and wait in sobriety and fear, till the Lord clear up, and make things manifest; and likewise in the mean time to take heed of a hasty concluding, according to what rises up in the understanding or judgment (though with ever so great a seeming clearness and satisfaction) as if it must needs be of and from the life in the vessel.

It is not an easy matter, in all cases, clearly and understandingly to discern the voice of the Shepherd, the motions of God's Spirit, and certainly to distinguish the measure of life from all other voices, motions, and appearances whatsoever. Through much growth in the truth, through much waiting on the Lord, through much fear and trembling, through much sobriety and meekness, through much exercise of the senses, this is at length given and obtained. And yet there is a preservation in the mean time to that which is lowly and submissive, looking up to the Lord continually, and not trusting to its own understanding, sense, and judgment. But that which is hasty and confident, and so ready to plead for its own sense and judgment, according to the measure of life, as it calls it; that is commonly out, entered into the erring spirit, pleading and contending for it knows not what, and is very apt to judge and condemn others in that very respect, wherein itself is most justly and righteously judged and condemned by the Lord, even by his pure life and Spirit in his people.

This then is in my heart to say in short to this objection: Let the measure of life judge freely in you at any time concerning any thing, and that judgment will stand forever. But be you wary, wait on the Lord, that you may be sure you do not mistake in your own particular, calling that life which the Lord and his people know to be otherwise. For if so, you depart from the unity and bond of the Spirit, and from the true sense and judgment, and give deceit an advantage over you, even to lay a foundation of destroying you. Likewise those who are to watch over you in the Lord (to lay this truth before you, to exhort and reprove you, as occasion is) that they may give an account of your soul to him, cannot do it with joy and rejoicing in his presence, but with grief and lamentation of heart; which is not at all profitable, but very unprofitable for you.

Now for a close: there are some considerations springing up in my heart concerning unity, which I find drawings here to annex, in true love and tenderness, for the use and service of others; which are as follows:

1. Unity in the spiritual body, which is gathered into and knit together in the pure life, is a most natural and comely thing. Yes, it is exceeding lovely to find all that are of the Lord of one heart, of one mind, of

one judgment, in one way of practice and order in all things.

2. The Lord is to be waited upon for the bringing forth of this in the body; that as there is a foundation of it laid in all (the life and spring being over all), so all may be brought by him into the true and full oneness.

3. The Lord is to be acknowledged and praised in the bringing of it forth (so far as it is brought forth), and to be waited upon for the further perfecting of it.

4. A watch is to be kept (throughout the whole body, and in every heart) for the preserving of it, so far as it is brought forth, that the enemy, by no device or subtlety, cause disunion or difference in any respect, wherein there was once a true unity and oneness. For the enemy will watch to divide; and if he be not watched against, in that which is able to discover and keep him out, by some device or other he will take his advantage to make a rent (in those that are not watchful), from the pure truth and unity of life in the body. For he that in the least thing rents from the body (in any respect or particular which was brought forth by the life), he in that respect hearkens to another spirit, even the dividing spirit, and by its instigation rents from the life itself, and so does not keep his habitation, nor his unity, with that which abides in its habitation.

Now it is also in my heart, for the perfecting of this close, to mention a few things (in the same love and tenderness) which I have found helpful to me towards the preserving of me in unity with the body. Perhaps it may please the Lord to refresh some others by the mention of them, and to make them useful and helpful to them also.

1. The first is, *the pure fear of the Lord*. This poises and guards the mind, keeping down fleshly confidence and conceitedness (which is very apt to spring up), making it wary and considerate either of what it receives or rejects; of what it practices, or forbears practicing; causing it to wait much, try much, and consult much with the Lord, and with his ministers and people, and preserves out of that suddenness and inconsiderateness of spirit, at which the enemy often enters. For truth is weighty, and will bear trial, and the more it is tried in the balance, the more manifest its nature and ways appear: but the enemy's appearance and likenesses are not so; but their deceit, by a thorough trial, comes to be made manifest.

2. The second is, *humility of heart*. This is very precious, and of a preserving nature. Yes, in this state the Lord helps and teaches; and the soul also (in this state) is fit to receive the help and teachings of the Lord. That which is lifted up and conceited (ready to justify its own way, and condemn even the whole body) is neither fit to be taught by the Lord, nor does the Lord delight (but rather disdain) to teach it. And so not being taught by him, it must needs be liable to err; yes, to hearken to that spirit, whose voice is more pleasing and suitable to the erring mind than the Lord's voice is.

3. A third great help, which in the tender mercy of the Lord I have had experience of, is *sobriety of judgment*. Not to value or set up mine own judgment, or that which I account the judgment of life in me, above the judgment of others, or that which is indeed life in others. For the Lord has appeared to others, as well as to me: yes, there are others who are in the growth of his truth, and in the purity and dominion of his life, far beyond me. Now for me to set up, or hold forth, a sense or judgment of a thing

in opposition to them, this is out of the sobriety which is of the truth. Therefore, in such cases, I am to retire, and fear before the Lord, and wait upon him for a clear discerning and sense of his truth, in the unity and demonstration of his Spirit with others, who are of him, and see him. And this will prevent the rents which the lack of this sobriety may occasion.

4. The last thing which I have now to mention is, tenderness, *meekness, coolness, and stillness of spirit*. I wrap up these together, because they are much of a nature, and go much together. These are of a uniting, preserving nature. He that differs and divides from the body cannot be thus; and he that is thus cannot rend or divide. This is the pure, heavenly wisdom, which is peaceable and keeps the peace; but the other wisdom is rough, stiff, hard, clamorous, ready to take offense, ready to give offense; exceeding deep in the justification of itself, exceeding deep in the condemnation of others; and dares (in this temper) appeal to the Lord, as if it were right in its ways, but wronged by others; as if it did abide in the measure of his truth and life, which others have departed from. And how can it be otherwise? How can the wrong eye, the wrong spirit, the wrong wisdom, but judge wrong, justifying the wrong practices, and condemning the right? But such shall find (if they come to the true touchstone, even the measure of life indeed) that they are not in the true tenderness, which proceeds from the life, in the true meekness and gentleness, in the true coolness and stillness; but rather in the reasonings, noises, clamors, and disturbances, which arise from another spirit, mind, and nature than that which is of the truth. And in coming back from this wisdom to the *pure wisdom*, from the pretended measure of life to the *true measure*, and becoming tender, meek, cool, and still in it, they shall there feel their error from the Spirit and power of the Lord, and therein own their condemnation therefore from him; and also justify them who have abode in the power, and been guided by the Spirit and pure measure of life, which is from God, and in God, while they have departed from it. For though the spirit of error (wherewith they have been deceived and entangled) has made them believe that they have faithfully abode in the principle and doctrine of truth, while others have departed; yet that will soon vanish, as truth comes again to be felt, and heard speak in them, and the measure of life to live again in them, and to redeem them afresh into its holy nature, and pure, living sense. And blessed is he who is not deceived about truth; but is of the *pure nature*, and in the *pure power* of it; in whom the *true eye sees*, the *true ear* hears, the *true heart* understands; who is of a *right spirit*, and walks *uprightly* before the Lord, and among his people. The blessing of the seed, the peace, comfort, and joy which is from the Most High, shall descend upon him, fill his vessel, and continue with him, to the satisfying of his heart, and the overflowing of his cup, in the midst of his brethren, and in the very sight of his enemies. The Lord God, of his tender mercy, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep, watch over, preserve, and mightily defend all his from all devouring spirits, and inward devices and deceits of the enemy; carrying on and perfecting the work of his goodness, love, and mercy in them, to his own glorious, eternal, everlasting praise. Amen.

Written by ISAAC PENINGTON, in Aylesbury prison

# **SOME DEEP CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

## **PAST, PRESENT, AND TO COME**

**WITH**

**SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

## **CONCERNING UNITY**

**[no date]**

MANY deep considerations have been upon my heart concerning the state of Israel, both past, present, and to come; some of which I find drawings to communicate; together with some QUESTIONS and ANSWERS concerning UNITY. The Considerations concerning Israel are these which follow: —

The precious living state which my soul remembers to have been about the beginning of the late troubles of this nation, when Israel was bent to seek after the Lord, and applied their hearts to wait upon him in fastings, and earnest supplications, wherein my heart has often had the testimony that they were accepted of him, and had many times the seal of his presence and power among them: yes, my heart did truly unite with and enjoy the Lord in what was then given forth, and I can never be drawn to deny the truth and worth of that dispensation; though I know it was swallowed up by a greater desolation soon following after, and since by the breaking forth of a more lively dispensation.

2. The over-running of that state by the subtlety of the enemy, drawing the minds of the simple and upright-hearted from the living feeling, and from the inward power of religion, into the disputations and contentions about forms of worship and church-government, which drew out the reasoning part, and withdrew the spirit of the mind from feeding on its proper nourishment; and so life decayed in the spirit, while wisdom, and knowledge, and subtlety increased in the understanding. And so the upright-hearted, missing of life where before they had found it, were scattered up and down to seek after it; and those who abode where they were, grew dry, barren, and contentious; losing the savor, sweetness, meekness, love, and indeed whatever was living and precious, and remained fixing their minds on that which the Lord had departed from. Oh, the darkness and misery of this state! Oh, the pain of the hearts where life was stirring, for lack of the living God! Oh, the death and formality of those that were dead and formal! Surely, had not the Lord pitied his people in this state, and appeared to them in his life and power (which this great desolation made way for), it had been determined concerning Israel forever: for death had overgrown the generality, and life was even gasping and expiring in the single-hearted.

3. The precious breaking forth of the Lord (at this dismal time, in this hour of distress and desperate condition of Israel) in some hidden vessels, whom he had kept waiting upon him, and whom he had

preserved fresh in the sense of him; to whom his appearance was very glorious, to whom he opened the state of the earth, and the state of his people, giving them the everlasting gospel to preach to the inhabitants of the earth, and promising them that his Spirit and power should go along with them, bidding them go forth to till and dress the earth, and to gather his people into his fold. And who can utter what the glory of this light was, in its shining and breaking forth in their hearts! How welcome to their weary souls, how pleasant to the eye of their spirits, how demonstrative and satisfactory to their hearts! Oh! the joy of that day (surely it can never be forgotten by them) wherein they sensibly felt the pouring down of the Spirit of life upon them, and their hearts gathered into the bosom of eternal rest, and their souls and bodies sanctified, and set apart for the Lord and his service.

4. The contemptible means God put into their hands to work this work by; which was not by preaching any new thing, but by directing to a principle which God had already hid in the earth of every man's heart, and which was to be known by its divine nature and light, turning against and reproving sin; testifying that this was the way the Lord of heaven and earth had chosen, to bring his sons and daughters into the power and glory of his life. Oh! what heart can receive this, what eye can see any beauty in this, but that which the Lord touches and opens! I testify, in the sense of life, that the wisdom of man, yes, the wisdom of Israel corrupted, cannot but despise and turn from this. Is not this the lowest of all dispensations? Is not this common to all mankind? Does not this fall short (in itself, as I may say, and as it has formerly been dispensed) of the dispensation of the law of Moses to the Jews, much more of the dispensation by Christ and his apostles? Who would have looked for the Lord here! And yet this has the Lord chosen to gather his people by, and to appear to the world in; and has gathered the life, virtue, and substance of all former dispensations into it, as those who are gathered thereby, and have waited upon him therein, and felt the nature and power of his life, (and seen things past, present, and to come) are living witnesses of, against all the gainsayings, thoughts, and reasonings of flesh and blood.

5. The contemptibleness of the vessels, which the Lord chose to fill with this treasure, and to let forth this dispensation of his life through. They were for the most part mean, as to the outward; young country lads, of no deep understanding, or ready expression, but very fit to be despised everywhere by the wisdom of man, and only to be owned in the power of that life wherein they came forth. How ridiculous was their manner of coming forth and appearance to the eye of man! About what poor, trivial circumstances, habits, gestures, and things, did they seem to lay great weight, and make great matters of moment! How far did they seem from being acquainted with the mysteries and depths of religion! But their chief preaching was *repentance, and about a light within, and of turning to that, and proclaiming the great and terrible day of the Lord to be at hand*; wherein I confess my heart exceedingly despised them, and cannot wonder that any wise man, or sort of professors, did, or do yet, despise them. Yes, they themselves were very sensible of their own weakness, and unfitness for that great work and service wherewith the Lord had honored them, and of their inability to reason with man; and so (in the fear and in the watch of their spirits) kept close to their testimony, and to the movings of his power, not mattering to answer or satisfy the reasoning part of man, but singly minding the reaching to, and raising of, that to which their testimony was.

6. The blessing that God gave to this his dispensation of life in their hands. Oh, how did the Lord prosper them in gathering his scattered, wandering sheep into his fold of rest! How did their words drop down like dew, and refresh the hungry, thirsty souls! How did they reach to the life in those to

whom they ministered, raising up that which lay dead in the grave, to give a living testimony to the living voice of God in them! How did they batter the wisdom and reasonings of man, making the loftiness thereof stoop and bow to the weak and foolish babe of the begettings of life! Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what the power of life has wrought, through them, in the hearts and consciences of those, who have longed after, and waited for, the Lord. Oh! the breathings and meltings of soul, the sense of the living presence of God, the subjecting of the heart unto the Lord, the awakening of and giving strength unto his witness, the falling down and weakening of the powers of darkness, the clear shining of the light of life in the heart, and the sweet running of the pure streams thereof into the enlivened souls, which has often been known and sealed to from the powerful appearance of God in their ministry! Indeed when I have considered these and such like things in my heart, and narrowly marked them in my converse with them, I have been often forced to cry out concerning them, *Truly here is man very weak and contemptible; but God very glorious and powerful.* And indeed, when at any time I looked on the man, I was hardly able to forbear disdaining them; but, on the other hand, when the eye of my spirit beheld the power and glory of the Lord in them, I could hardly forbear over-esteeming and exalting them.

7. The glory which the Lord advanced these vessels to, since his beginning to make use of them. How has he enriched them with gifts and abilities, and every way fitted them for the service and employment he has had for them! How has he enlarged their ministry, that they who had very little to say, either by way of declaration or disputation at first, now abound with strength, and abundantly surpass the knowledge and wisdom both of the world, and of other professors of religion! The Lord indeed has adorned them, putting his beauty upon them, and causing them to grow up in his strength, and in his wisdom. This mine eye has seen, and often taken notice of, blessing the name of the Lord, and praying to him for their preservation. And surely whoever he be, that has either known himself, or heard the relation of the poverty of these young striplings, when they first came forth in the power of the Lord, how empty in themselves they then were, how sensibly they went up and down of their own weakness, how little they had to say to people that came to observe them and inquire of them, how afraid they were to be drawn from their watch, at what a distance they stood from entering into reasoning about things, — I say, he that did know, and does consider this, and shall also behold how the Lord has advanced them since, making them mighty and honorable with his gifts and abilities (with the beauty whereof the very man flourishes to the sight of every eye that is in any measure truly open), cannot but acknowledge the change to be wonderful.

8. I have had the sense and consideration of this also in my heart, that their danger is now greater than when they were poorer, weaker, and not so enriched and gifted by the Lord. The enemy is very subtle and watchful, and there is danger to Israel all along, both in the poverty and in the riches; but the greater danger is in the riches: because then man is apt to forget God, and to lose something of the sense of his dependence (which keeps the soul low and safe in the life), and also to allow something of exaltation to creep upon him, which presently in a degree corrupts and betrays him. *The heart that is in any measure lifted up in itself, so far it is not upright in the Lord.* Let every one feel this, waiting to be preserved, and praying for those who are most beautified by gifts and abilities from the life, because in this respect (and at this time) their danger is greatest. When Israel is poor, low, weak, trembling, seeing no loveliness nor worthiness in himself, but depending upon the mere mercy and tender bowels of the Lord in the free covenant of his love, etc., then is Israel safe. But when he has a being given him in the life, and is richly adorned with the ornaments of life, and comes to have the power

itself in his hand to make use of, then is he in more danger of being something of himself, and of forgetting him that formed him, (being apt to make use of his gifts without such an immediate sense of the giver as he had in his trembling and weak estate) and so of departing out of that humble, tender, abased, contrite state, and temper of spirit, wherein he was still preserved.

9. This also has been manifest to me, and deeply impressed on my spirit all along, that the Lord may, if he see good, allow some great and eminent ones to fall in Israel. Man may forget himself, and the Lord may let out temptation upon him, and allow it to enter, that he may bring him to the sense and feeling of his weakness again. Yes, those who have felt the power of the Lord in and through an instrument, may give more to the instrument than belongs unto it, and so put the Lord upon recovering the honor due to him, which is misplaced and misapplied to that which is but his instrument. This is the Lord's day (the light thereof is his, the life his, the power his), and the glory thereof will he not give to another. If therefore any man, in this day, shall take to himself what belongs to the Lord, or any other shall give it him, the Lord will not so lose it, but will find out a way to recover his own. And happy is the man who lies continually perfectly abased before the Lord, assuming nothing of the Lord's to himself, nor attributing any thing of the Lord's to another, that the Lord alone may be exalted everywhere. And let all gifts serve the seed, and its rising over all gifts be waited for, that the life everywhere may have its due, being lifted up over all.

10. I have had a deep sense of this also, that if the Lord should allow such a thing to fall out among us, it may cause a great shaking and scattering in Israel. Surely I may say, it would come very unexpectedly and unsuspectedly to many; and so such persons would be surprised with it, and not at all prepared for it. Alas! who could suspect (feeling persons so eminent in the power, and so exercised and skillful in the way and paths of righteousness, and so able to instruct others therein) that they could possibly fall in any degree from the truth and power of life! And yet they are not free from temptation: and if they be confident of their own strength, and forget the tender hand of the Lord, he may allow a temptation to enter them, which presently begets a ground for evil weeds to spring up in, and for blindness, and hardness, and error from the pure power, to creep in at.

O dear friends! who know the preciousness of life, and desire the preservation of the Lord in your several conditions, let us fear the Lord, and his goodness to us, remembering what a low ebb we were at when the Lord visited us, and how freely he visited, and how freely he daily preserves, that we may not be hardened or lifted up against the world, or against any sort of professors; but may magnify the grace which has made and keeps up the difference between us and them, praying to the Lord for them, and watching for the hour of his mercy to them, exercising all manner of sweetness, and meekness, and long-suffering towards them in the mean time: also pitying and bearing with all the tempted ones among ourselves, as such who are sensible that we also may be tempted, and that understand the ground why we fall not by the temptation.

What shall I say more? There are three QUERIES appearing in my view, in relation to this thing, which the hearts of some may desire satisfaction about; to which I find something, in way of answer, springing up in me.

Query 1. How may a man, whom the Lord has exalted by gifts and services to him, be preserved from falling?

Answer 1. There is that which waits to preserve, and is still stretching forth its hand, to keep to itself that which it has gathered; which being hearkened and yielded unto in its discoveries, and warnings, will not fail to deliver the soul from the danger and snares of every condition.

2. There is the free mercy and love of the covenant, wherein the soul may find help and pity, although it should be something tainted and entangled with the snares of the enemy.

3. There is a proper frame or state of spirit; namely, of humility and brokenness, which is fit for Israel in every condition; but more especially when he is exalted in the dominion and power of life, and honored with great gifts and services for the Lord. In this Israel is safe: and happy is he who is not allowed to abide in any degree of exaltation of spirit; but is brought down again (through the tender mercy and love of the Lord) into this, though by the buffetings of Satan.

Query 2. How may the little ones, if the Lord should allow one or more (of such as have been very eminent in his service) to decline and fall, how may they be preserved from falling with him or them?

Answer. Keeping to the measure of life in the particular, and not valuing others by an apprehension concerning them; but only knowing and honoring them as they are felt and discerned in the life; this will preserve every particular (that is thus ordered) from being tainted with any of their snares or deviations. *O Israel! O little babes? know no man after the flesh; but the Lord alone in his living Spirit.* For man is but a vessel, wherein the life may appear or disappear at pleasure; and the Lord is not engaged to make use of man in his service, further than he sees good. The Lord may appear where he has never appeared before, and he may not appear where he has hitherto appeared very frequently and powerfully. Oh! know the life in your own heart, that is to be the judge in you concerning the appearances of life in others. If that judge not, be still and silent in your heart, waiting for its judgment: when that judges, let all your thoughts and reasonings be bowed down under it. Let man have no more than his due, while the Lord pleases to make use of him; and to such there will accrue no great shaking or damage, when the Lord lays aside any of his own instruments. But if any thing but the life judge, it will still either be setting up, or throwing down, man: whereby there will come loss on either hand in the issue, to all such who thus act.

Query 3. How may any such, as have fallen from a high and glorious state in the power and dominion of life, be again recovered?

Answer. Indeed this is a very difficult thing: not because the mercy and power of the Lord is at a loss to or concerning man in this state; but because this condition sets a man's spirit at so great a distance from the use of that remedy which the Lord has appointed for man's recovery. It is very hard to bring such a one to the sense of his loss (whereby the depth of his fall might be prevented) until he be gone very far; and the further he goes in his declining from the life, the harder will his recovery be. Again: it is hard for such a one to become so poor, and lie so low and so long at the foot of God's grace, as also to be contented to be so laid aside and not made use of, as the Spirit of the Lord may judge necessary for him, to bring him into a perfect abasement of spirit, and to work that perfectly out of him whereby the enemy now entered to betray him: yes, the judgment of the Lord (the righteous and severe judgment of the Lord) is hard to be borne in this state; and it is much if such a vessel do not break here, in its new forming on the wheel. Yet that which bows before the Lord, being willing to be smitten and abased by



him, and to lie under his correction and judgment his season, even until he say it is enough, the Lord will without doubt restore into his favor, if not also into the honor of his service again.

Objection. But some tender heart may say (which feels many weaknesses, much unbelief, and the danger of falling daily), If this be true, oh, what will become of me! If such as these be liable to fall, and to fall so dangerously, how shall I stand! I was wounded enough before with the sense of my own condition; but this affrights me much more.

Answer. O tender heart! the enemy may make use of this to trouble and afflict you; but it was not so intended by the Lord, who is very full of unutterable bowels, and who has a day of bowels for your state: yes, his day, which has already dawned, is so dawning as to reach you. The Lord has not yet done gathering his scattered sheep, nor yet shown the utmost skill he has, either to gather, or to preserve; and the state of the weakest, under the preserving power of the Lord, is safe. Great are the diseases of Israel; great is yet the loss of scattered souls, which as yet know not the call of the Shepherd; and if at any time they do feel a touch thereof, are easily reasoned again out of it, and driven back by the thoughts of their own hearts. Oh! great, great also is the skill of the Shepherd, and his hand very tender, which the Lord is putting forth for the help of these; blessed be his name. And as the condition of these needs and requires that from the nature and soul of the Lord, which the conditions of others do not require; so the nature of the Lord has mercy and love in it to answer their states, and will give it out in his day and season. Oh! let none be offended thereat. Let no eye throughout all Israel be evil, because the Lord is exceeding good. If he please to kill the fatted calf, and set it before his prodigal son, let none that have walked faithfully with him in any dispensation be offended thereat: but rather let all (in whom is life) stand ready to shout at the issuings forth of love and mercy, in the varieties of the dispensations thereof, according to the need and capacity of every sort of vessels, prepared by the Lord to receive it. Therefore, *O you afflicted! tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; you shall know and feel this from the Lord, that he knows how to bring home his consolations to your soul, and to cast you into the mould of his life, and bring you forth in the power of his righteousness; and that he needs not to find any worthiness or righteousness in you; for he can create and make room for it in your heart; yes, he can begin, carry on, and perfect his work in you, for his own name's sake. And to you, O broken soul! I cannot so much say, do this, or believe this; but rather, the Lord will work in you; yes, the Lord will quicken faith in you, and raise up his own nature from the seed of his own life, which he himself has sown in your inward parts, and will not fail to preserve.

Besides, this broken state of yours (wherein the vileness and weakness of self is daily felt, with the exceeding great need of the Lord's preserving power and mercy) is a safe state; towards which, that which (alone) preserves, is continually issuing forth in the bowels of his tenderness. And though you do not see the love of the Lord, and his tender care over you (and so lacks the comfort of your own condition); yet it is never a whit the less in the heart and Spirit of the Lord towards you; and in various respects I may say, it is better for you at present to lack the sight of it. I am satisfied in my heart concerning the nature and ways of the Lord, and I know there is that mercy in him which my soul cries for; and that it is not only treasured up, but about to be issued forth towards those for whose sakes the cry is unto him for it. The Lord will arise, and have mercy upon Zion, even upon the mourners and distressed ones in Zion; he will say to them who are of a fearful heart, and mourn bitterly because of their unbelief (finding themselves as unable to believe now for righteousness, as ever the Jews were to work for it); be strong; stand still; wait on me your God; behold, my righteousness is ready to be

revealed, and I am bringing that faith with me which you lack, to give your souls the entrance into my promises, and into my divine nature promised. You are my lambs, and my bosom is for you, and there will I gather you; yes, you have already conceived, and are with young, though you know it not; and I will lead you on gently in a way that you cannot, nor never shall, know, as you would know it; but shall not lack or miss of that knowledge thereof, that I see good for you. I will beget a deeper life in you, and bring it forth after a deeper way of dispensation than you have yet been acquainted with, or than your understandings can comprehend; but in the death which I am bringing upon you, and in the travailing pangs which you shall feel in your hearts, shall it spring up in you and be brought forth. O dear lambs! mind the quickenings of life, and the savor and sense which the Lord begets in the heart, and let the outward knowledge (even of what you have had experience) go, but as the Lord quickens it; and mind not the noises of thoughts and reasonings about things, which the soul's enemy will be striving to fill you with, and batter you by; but sink down from these, and wait to feel that which lies beneath them; in the free nature, life, virtue, power, and motions whereof alone is your soul's salvation; and if you cannot receive the sense of this direction at present, wait on the Lord either for it, or for what other manifestation or tender help he shall please to give forth unto you.

### **SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING SPIRITUAL UNITY**

Question 1. WHAT is spiritual unity?

Answer. The meeting of the same spiritual nature in the many, in one and the same spiritual center or streams of life. When the spirits or souls of creatures are begotten by one power into one life, and meet in heart there; so far as they thus meet, there is true unity among them.

Question 2. Wherein 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. It consists not in any outward or inward thing of an inferior nature; but only keeps within the limits and bounds of the same nature. The doing the same thing, the thinking the same thing, the speaking the same thing, this does not unite here in this state, in this nature; but only the doing, or thinking, or speaking of it in the same life. Yes, though the doings, or thoughts, or words be various; yet if they proceed from the same principle and nature, there is a true unity felt therein, where the life alone is judge.

Question 3. How is the unity preserved?

Answer. Only by abiding in the life; only by keeping to the power, and in the principle, from which the unity sprang, and in which it stands. Here is a knitting of natures, and a fellowship in the same spiritual center. Here the diverse and different motions of several members in the body (thus coming from the life and Spirit of the body) are known to, and owned by, the same life, where it is fresh and sensible. It is not keeping up an outward knowledge (or belief concerning things) that unites, nor keeping up an outward conformity in actions, etc., for these may be held and done by another part in man, and in another nature; but it is by keeping and acting in that which did at first unite. In this there

is neither matter nor room for division; and he that is within these limits, cannot but be found in the oneness.

Question 4. How is the unity interrupted?

Answer. By the interposition of any thing of a different nature or spirit from the life. When any thing of the earthly or sensual part comes between the soul and the life, this interrupts the soul's unity with the life itself; and it also interrupts its unity which the life in others, and the unity of the life in others with it. Any thing of the man's spirit, of the man's wisdom, of the 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 is something of the nature of division: yes, the very knowledge of truth, and holding of it forth by the man's wisdom, and in his will, out of the movings and power of the life, brings a damp upon the life, and interrupts the unity; for the life in others cannot unite with this in spirit, though it may own the words to be true.

Question 5. How may unity be recovered, if at any time decaying?

Answer. In the Lord alone is the recovery of Israel, from any degree of loss in any kind, at any time; who 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, upon the sense of any lack thereof; even every one, through the Lord's help, retiring (in his own particular) and furthering the retirings of others to the principle of life, that every one there may feel the washing from what has in any measure corrupted, and the new-begetting into the power of life. From this the true and lasting unity will spring amain, to the gladding of all hearts that know the sweetness of it, and who cannot but naturally and most earnestly desire it. Oh! mark therefore; the way is not by striving to beget into one and the same apprehension concerning things, nor by endeavoring to bring into one and the same practices; but by alluring and drawing into that wherein the unity consists, and which brings it forth in the vessels, which are seasoned therewith and ordered thereby. And from this let all wait for the daily new and living knowledge, and for the ordering of their lives and practices in that light, (and drawings thereof) and in that simplicity and integrity of heart which the Spirit of life at present holds forth and works in them; and the life will be felt, and the name of the Lord praised in all the tents of Jacob, and through all the inhabitants of his Israel; and there will be but *one heart, and one soul, and one spirit, and one mind, and one way and power of life*; and what is already wrought in every heart, the Lord will be acknowledged in, and his name praised: and the Lord's season contentedly waited for his filling up of what is lacking anywhere. So the living God (the God of Israel, the God of everlasting tender bowels and 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 to 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 any thing relating to one another. Oh! this is unworthy to be found in an Israelite towards an Egyptian; but 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 every thing well concerning his disciples, that may bear a good interpretation! "The spirit" says 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. O 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 excuse 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 crying out of one another because of evil; but watch and wait where the mercy and the healing virtue will please to arise. O Lord, my God, when you have shown the needs of Israel in any kind sufficiently, whether in the particular, or in the general, bring forth the supply thereof from your fulness, so ordering it in your eternal wisdom, that all may be ashamed and abased before you, and your name praised in and over all.

ISAAC PENINGTON

# **CONCERNING GOD'S SEEKING OUT HIS ISRAEL**

**LIKEWISE**

**CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE, WHEREBY HE SEEKS THEM**

**AND**

**THE WAY OF THEIR CLOSING WITH HIS SPIRIT THEREIN**

**AS ALSO CONCERNING**

## **THE TWO COVENANTS**

**UNDER ONE WHEREOF HE PLEASES TO EXERCISE AND PREPARE THEM FOR THE  
LIFE AND INHERITANCE, WHICH HE HATH TREASURED UP FOR THEM IN THE  
OTHER**

**WITH A POSTSCRIPT, RELATING SOME THINGS NECESSARY FOR LOST MAN TO BE  
ACQUAINTED WITH, IN HIS TRAVELS FROM HIS LOST ESTATE**

**BY ISAAC PENINGTON**

**[1663]**

**To such in Godmanchester, and thereabouts, who bear the reproachful name of  
Quakers; whose religion began in the power, and who still abide and walk on in the  
power, waiting to be perfected in the full manifestation and appearance thereof.**

**DEAR FRIENDS IN GOD'S PURE ETERNAL TRUTH,**

It was my lot once to be among you in a meeting, together with a certain friend, where I had a word unto you from the Lord, while the said friend was declaring. But being exceedingly bowed down in spirit, and afraid to interrupt the service in him (whom I looked upon as far more abundantly grown up in the life, and fitter to minister from the life), I waited till the life in him should stop. But then those words, which had often sprung in me before, sprung not again; and I durst not then speak them from a bare remembrance of them, not finding the Spirit of the Lord then giving them me to speak. So I went away with a burden on my own soul, and also with a sense of some loss to you of some part of the good which the Lord intended for you. Since that time, I have often remembered the thing with grief; crying to the Lord, that that which has so often stopped the life in me, and my service in the life might in his good time be removed; and that the day might come, wherein the man might never more

be or appear, as of himself, or as a determiner concerning the things which flow from the life, but that the life might have its free course and current through me, in its own pure streamings, to the delighting of my own heart in the Lord, and the refreshing of others. And indeed this day I exceedingly long for, that nothing of self might be left to be brought forth, and that all which is of the life might spring up and flourish, both in me and everywhere.

Now one morning, as my heart was breathing towards the Lord, not having a thought either of you or this thing, the very same words which were given me in that meeting, sprang up again livingly in me, with a pointing to write them down, with what the Lord should please to give in further, and send them to you, together with a paper, which was a little before written, concerning the two covenants. And when I had almost finished what was then given me to write, I was further directed to annex to the first paper another concerning the principle.

How the Lord shall please to improve them to your advantage, or to the advantage of any others, I leave to him; it being the earnest desire of my heart, that his work may prosper in his hand, and that the light and power which issues forth from him for the salvation of souls, may be effectual thereunto; and that nothing of love, of mercy, of goodness, of life, of salvation, of his searching and healing virtue may be held back by him, which the state or condition of any of his sheep or lambs (whether lost or gathered) calls for. That his Israel may become the glory of the earth, and all nations may be refreshed with beholding the beauty, and tasting the sweetness, of life and righteousness, which shall assuredly flow forth from his sanctuary. And surely the time is not far off (whatever the eye of sense may judge, and however things may appear to man's understanding) wherein Israel shall be no more compelled to worship in the temples of men's building and dedicating; but shall in the beauty of holiness. For the day is come (yes, the blessed day is come) wherein the Lord God of life will build up his Zion, and appear there in his glory; Amen, hallelujah.

## CONCERNING

### GOD'S SEEKING OUT HIS ISRAEL

THIS is the word which was given to me; *The Shepherd of Israel is seeking out his sheep, even the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Concerning which, these three Questions sprang up in me one after another, as I was about to write, and writing.

Question 1. Who are his sheep?

Answer. His sheep are the sons of men; the lost sheep of the house of Israel are those among the sons of men, who have felt touches of his life, begettings into his nature, and were in some measure gathered into some appearance and dispensation of his life by his Holy Spirit; wherein they felt warmth from God in their spirits, and a delight and joy in what they felt, and a longing after a further manifestation of him. These were his sheep, in a gathered estate in some degree, by those dispensations of life in the darkness, which had some strength in them to gather from under the darkness, and did gather into that measure of light and life that was then dispensed. But the sheep cleaving to the dispensations (which were very weak and imperfect, and had little of Spirit, but very much of flesh in them) and not following the lamb out of them into the further dispensations of life,

into which he stood ready to lead; the Lord brake them in pieces, departed from them, and left the life to be made a prey of, and brought under the captivity of death; so that the sheep were scattered upon the mountains, and every beast of prey was ready to fasten his teeth on them and devour them. Oh! the precious buddings forth of the virtue and power of God, that were to be found in the several sorts of professors, while they sought the Lord only, and the knowledge of one another in the breathing spirit, and minded not the outward form, but the feeling of life in their duties and ordinances!

But when they began to mind the form, and cry up several forms; the Lord also began to loathe the forms, and did not give forth that among them, which formerly they met with, but took away the kernel, and left them the shell: and oh, how dry and barren have they become since! Where is the feeling of life? Where is the love to one another in the living sense? Where is the zeal after, and earnest seeking of, the power of religion? Where is the nature of the sheep to be found in them? And where is the presence of the Shepherd among them? Are they not *lost sheep* indeed, lost to God, lost to themselves? Have they not lost the *holy, pure, sweet, meek, heavenly, tender, gentle nature of the sheep*? Have they not lost the *pasture and the fold*, whereon they were wont to feed, and wherein they were wont to lie down safe? Have they not lost the *preserver of their souls* from the devouring spirit? No, have they not lost the very *seed of life*, which the good husbandman did sow in them? And do not evil seeds shoot up in the stead thereof, to the poisoning of their hearts, and blemishing of their lives? And are not some of them insensible of their loss, and lie still drowned in their forms, thinking to confine the appearance of the free life and unlimited Spirit there? Others of them sick, and deeply wounded and languishing, not knowing where to meet with the good Shepherd, nor how to make shift without him? Oh, the cries of the desolate and mourning souls, which love God at their hearts, and have the relics of his nature left in them in a seed still; which he once begot and brought forth in some freshness! Oh, their deep anguish! their miserable lost condition for lack of meeting with the Physician! their pantings, their tears, their distresses, their roarings out, their overwhelmings, their several kinds of captivities, and the cruelties exercised upon their spirits by the captiver, even break my heart, that I am almost overwhelmed in the sense of their misery! But my heart is something comforted with the freshness of this testimony, which has often risen up in the immediate life of God in my heart; and I have heard his voice speaking it, even that *he will seek them out*. And I know he has the skill to find them, in their several mourning holes, wherein they lie hid; and the pits whereinto they are tumbled; and the briars and thorns of the wilderness, wherewith they are torn, and wherein they are twisted and entangled, and held pining to death; and in the prisons, and chains, and fetters of their spirits, wherein they are closed up and bound down by the enemy of their souls.

Question 2. How will he seek them, and how will he find them out?

Answer. By the light of his Spirit shining in their hearts, by which he will touch and quicken the sheep's life, and open the sheep's ear, and persuade the heart to know and believe that it is he that visits in his tender mercy, and that he will have mercy on, and show compassion to, that which has long been cast off and forsaken; and he will be their God, and they shall be his people, even the house of Israel that had departed from him; and that he had not forgotten them, but waited for the hour of mercy, and for the season of the bringing forth of that life and power, whose searching and healing virtue will reach to the utmost extremity of their conditions.

Question 3. What will he do with them, when he has sought after and found them out?

Answer. He will gather them into the fold of life, and lead them into the pastures of life, and feed them with the food of life, as their conditions are able to bear; he will be fitting them by the exercises of his Spirit, for their passages from death to life; and as they are capable, so he will be still translating them from the one into the other. He will bring them from their several false-built states in the land of Egypt (or Babylon) into a true wilderness state; and there, as he wears out the old nature in them, so will he speak comfortably to them, and build up the new; and nourish the true Israelitish babe there with manna from heaven; and after he is grown up to a man's estate, and has received the inward circumcision, lead him into the pleasant land, where there are rich pastures, and the sweet still waters, and the precious milk and honey of the living, with which the land flows naturally, and which yields pure nourishment to all the living offspring. Oh! my heart is not able to contain the sense of all that God will do for Israel, or of what he will be to them, or of what they shall be to him, when he has finished his work upon them, and brought them forth (through the strength of his covenant) in the nature, and into the possession, of his life.

But sure I am he has begun his work; the light of the day (even of the everlasting day) has sprung and visited many; the principle of life has been revealed in the hearts of many; and many are gathering into it, and find the man sinking and dying; and the life rising and living in them day by day. And though the passage be bitter, and the passover still eaten with bitter herbs, and the devourer often let loose and allowed to nip and destroy; yet out of the eater at last comes forth meat, and out of the strong one in the issue comes forth sweetness. Yes, though there be no faith found to close in with the light, nor any strength left to obey or follow, because of the deep foregoing breakings (wherein both nature and spirit were all dashed in pieces, and swallowed up in confusion); yet the breath of life and the power of the light (in process of exercises, and after much deep misery, and impossibilities, to the sight and judgment of sense) at length raises up a little seed in the longing soul; which receives and brings forth, after a hidden way, that which it could not. And here life is indeed of grace, and wholly of the seed, in this state. Only wait to learn and know in spirit (and then take heed of despising) the weak beginnings and dawnings of light, in the secret stirrings and movings of the principle of life; and wait also for a watch to be set up in you against that fleshly wisdom and understanding, which will be apt to be judging about the work of God in your heart; for if it prevail so far, it will then also be begetting in you despisings of, and turnings from, the low beginnings thereof, and so divert your feet from the path of life. For the prevention whereof, and for the furtherance of your soul, in its closing with, and traveling on, in the light and guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, this following paper is added.

### **CONCERNING THE SEED OR INWARD PRINCIPLE, WHEREBY LIFE IS BEGOTTEN AND MAINTAINED IN THE HEART**

THE Lord God, who is full of everlasting bowels of compassion towards mankind in general, but more especially towards those, in whom he has begotten a sense of the need of him, with breathings and desires after him; has chosen a seed or inward principle of life to appear in, towards the breaking the bonds of their captivity, and the bringing them from under the power and misery of death.

This, many who have been overwhelmed with misery, and whose spirits have melted and failed with the lack of the sense of their God, and have felt that life, which was formerly built up in them, broken down and laid waste; and their communion with God swallowed up in the ruins thereof; and their souls ready utterly to perish and be devoured by the enemy every moment; after the cutting off of their



hopes, and the shutting up of their eyes towards all ways of relief; I say, after all this, and much more than can be expressed, in the tender mercy of the Lord, have they felt this principle revealed in their hearts, and their hearts by degrees, through the skill and same mercy of the Lord, which revealed the principle (and not from any worthiness, or faith and obedience of theirs; for that was as freely given and preserved, as the principle itself was revealed), gathered into the principle, where the life reigns, and where the strength and dominion of death is broken in all those, who by the allurings and guidings of the Spirit of the Lord are led there.

Now the main thing necessary towards the redemption of the soul is, after the revealing of this principle, and some sense and feeling of it, and the turning of the mind towards it, to wait to be made more and more acquainted with it, that in the stirrings, movings, and leadings thereof, there be a ready giving up to be gathered into it, and to be guided by it.

For though this principle be all life, yet it is at first 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, and some greater and more undeniable appearance expected. Yet that is not the way, but the soul must become subject unto, and bowed under, this little appearance; and so as the seed gets advantage, and grows bigger and larger in your heart, the appearance of the Lord will be greater and fuller there. But to look for the greater appearance, before the seed be owned and received in its lesser appearance (and the vessel thereby fitted for the greater appearance) is not the way of God, but the deceit of the enemy, whereby he would destroy the soul, and cut it off from the Lord forever; which he certainly will 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 therein to feel leadings and drawings from the life, 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 disputations which the enemy will raise in your mind, who will strive to make you a judge over these drawings; whereas the light, which arises in the savor and in the drawings, is your King (though in this low appearance), and not to be judged by the mind, thoughts, and reasonings, but to judge them all down, and be bowed unto and obeyed by you. And consider, in the weight of your spirit, 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 (you in your highest exaltation) is to be cast at the lowest footstep thereof; and then it will in some measure, you lying at the foot thereof, and bowing in spirit before it, enter into you, and enlighten and quicken you. But in your being wise about it, or taking upon you to judge concerning it, it will stand at a distance from you, and leave you in your darkness and captivity.

Therefore consider where you are, and breathe unto the Lord to reveal that unto you which is proper for you at present, and to bow your spirit under his present will and 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 for, and advancing 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, but as they become little, poor, and naked, and as they are led by the little

child of God's begetting; who not at all answers the wisdom of man and his expectations, but still confounds them, and leads on in such a path, as, if the eye of man's wisdom be open, it will still be crying out it can never bring to life. Yet that which disputes not, but believes, at seasons feels a progress, and that the growth of life had advantage in the heart by those very things, which at present seemed to give death the advantage.

Therefore watch against your understanding, and all the workings thereof, as ever you desire life; for it 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 sensible plant, not a knowing mind; and your right judgment is only in the sensibleness of that plant, and not in the understanding or comprehension of your mind; yes, that sensible plant (which your wisdom will be very apt to despise and perk over) must batter down and bring to nothing your understanding, and grow up in the stead of it, if ever your soul be made a habitation for the life. Therefore sink into the feeling, and dwell in the feeling, and wait for the savor of the principle of life, and the touches and drawings of the savor, and walk along in it towards the land of life, parting with all, and leaving behind you, whatever the savor of life disrelishes; and entering into, and taking up, whatever the savor of life relishes, that you may be prepared for the Lord, and for the glorious appearance of his Spirit in you.

And as you are led into this, and become subject to this; 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 lay it close to your charge, insomuch as you are not able to acquit yourself at all, but are as ready to charge yourself therewith, as the enemy is to charge you; yet the Lord considers the seed he has sown in you, and the desire which he has wrought in your heart to be joined thereunto; and he knows from where the stirring of this mind comes, and 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 forth so clear a light, as the natural understanding will be judging necessary; but be content with the light which arises in the savor, and shines inwardly to your spirit in the drawing; and be subject and bowed under the light of the drawing, though ever so much against the light of the creaturely understanding, and the reasonings thereof.

Clearness of light is a state which is to be grown up into; but before you comes to this, your understanding must be darkened, confounded, and brought to nothing; and you can not have such a clearness there, while it is confounding. There is indeed a true clearness in the principle of life (proportionable to its state and growth) even then; but the reasonings of your dark mind will be continually overclouding and overbearing it (as if it were darkness, and not the light), and will prevail, unless you be kept in the savor, and allow not your understanding to judge, but keep it under the judgment of the savor. Mark, therefore, heedfully this which follows: —

The first work of the Lord, is to confound the knowledge and understanding of the creature; especially in those who have been deep in wisdom and experience of things; for if they were not closely pursued with darkness and confusion, they would presently be gathering a stock into the old storehouse again, and so grow wise after the flesh, and never learn the life of the Spirit. Now in this work of confounding,

how can the leadings of God's Spirit be manifest and clear after the flesh, and to the fleshly understanding? Yes, if they were manifest after this manner, how were it possible to withhold the fleshly part from drinking them in? and so the man would live again, but the seed not live, which gains its life (and being and form and perfection) in the man, by the death of the man; even by the man's being hunted, and battered, and broken out of his wisdom, and knowledge, and reasoning, and comprehension; and becoming as a fool or child, being able to know nothing, nor retain nothing, nor perform nothing, nor keep his standing; but still as he is led, and taught, and created, and preserved in the power, and by the presence of the life.

## CONCERNING THE TWO COVENANTS

WHAT *is the covenant of the law?* Does it not contain and hold forth eternal life to man, upon his faith in, and obedience to the Spirit of God?

*What is the covenant of the gospel?* Does it not contain the promise to the seed, and life to man through the seed, and forgiveness of his sins for the seed's sake, and the uniting of his heart to, and preserving it in, the seed, through the grace; as also repentance, faith, and obedience from the grace?

Mark then the difference between the two covenants. The covenant of the law is all of works, and according to works; yes, even the faith that is there found (which is begotten and brought forth in man by virtue of that covenant) is of the man, or of the working principle. The covenant of the gospel is all of grace; and the very works that are found are from the grace, and the seed bestowed and conveyed by promise.

Now mark: The seed (or standing principle of life) in both covenants is the same. It is the same Christ by which Adam stood before the fall, and which was the promised seed after the fall. The light of both the covenants is the same, even the eternal light of the Spirit. The life and power is the same, even the life and power of the Spirit. The end or mark, at which man aims, and towards which he travels, in both is the same; even the land of rest and peace in the Spirit of the Father, who begets a living soul under both covenants. But the terms of the covenants, and the manner of dispensing them, are different; and the wombs, whereof the children of each covenant are born, are different likewise; the one being the working nature (which also came from God, and has its blessing from him in its obedience and subjection to him), the other the womb of grace, which brings forth the child of grace in man, according to, and by virtue of, the promise; and does not find a will in the day of man's choice and liberty, but creates a will in the day of God's powerful appearance in it.

Yet this seed of promise, or this new man begotten by the seed of life according to the promise, must walk through the law, and travel through all the dark paths of that covenant, before it come to inherit the promised land; where the rigor of the law and the weakness of the flesh will be thoroughly felt, and many transgressions and many stripes; yes, many captivities and cuttings off from the life may be felt also; yes, the seed of the first covenant may live and flourish, and enjoy and boast much of God, while this seed is miserable. But when this womb is visited with the strength of grace, and free power of life, and brings forth her children therein, and no more is called for from the working part of man, but all brought forth in the free, full, and fresh power of life; then shall the seed of Israel, after the promise, become an everlasting habitation for, and a perfect joy in, the life.

Therefore distinguish in spirit between the law and grace, and the covenants of each, and the dispensations of each, and how they are mixed and intermingled, both towards man and towards the seed, in the several dispensations in which each is brought forth. For there has been no perfect covenant brought forth, either of works or of grace (in a way of public administration), since the fall of Adam. Had there been a perfect covenant of works, there had been no capacity of salvation thereby to fallen man. Had there been a perfect covenant of grace, there had been no possibility or capacity of destruction: for grace, in its perfect going forth, cannot but overcome and save the man. But God orders both these covenants, both towards the man and towards the seed, according to the state of the man and the state of the seed, and according to what, in his eternal wisdom, he judges fitting to work upon them thereby.

Man being fallen, and having lost his strength of faith and obedience in and to the requirings of God's Spirit, the visitation of him is now by grace, and not merely to call forth what is left in him, but to help him with light and power, and by the influences of the grace and of the power to quicken him towards God. Yet man, in the receiving of this, is apt to overlook the grace, and attribute too much to his own strength, thinking himself something, because of the grace and power which has visited him, and new refreshed the strength and nature of his principle in him again. Hereby he is apt to fix his standing on his obedience to the Spirit or appearance of the grace, and so in effect builds his life and hopes on his own principle again, or on a new-received power, as held or kept to by him (which he may fall from now, as well as he did at first), and not on the free begetting and free preserving of a principle of life in him.

This visitation of grace is to all mankind, there being none upon earth, whom the Lord does not thus seek and visit with the light of his eternal life, thus administered through the grace; which so far as they fall in with, the Lord does receive them and beget life in them, ingrafting them into the living vine, and preserving them according to their abiding in it, and according to their obedience to him in the springings up of the sap of the vine in them.

But besides this common administration of the grace to all mankind, God formerly picked out a people after the flesh of Abraham, and afterwards a people after the spirit of Abraham, towards whom, in a more peculiar way, his grace did administer itself, and whom he dealt with, not as with other nations, but chose to love and work up into life and communion with himself, by a more especial administration and visitation of his love and grace. The one of these were that people of the Jews, the other the believing Christians.

With the Jews he remembered the covenant with Abraham. By virtue of that he loved and chose them to be his people after the flesh, or his outward people; by virtue of that he brought them out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness, brought them into Canaan, giving them an inheritance therein, and delivering them from their enemies time after time.

Yet he also made another covenant with them (even that of the law) which was suitable to their state, and which their nature desired, and chose to walk with God in, but hardly ever kept it, and so brought the curse and misery due thereby upon their heads, and at last were utterly cut off, so far and so long as the Lord pleases to let the curse of that covenant have power over them, until he shall please again to remember to them his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and breathe life through it into

their dry bones.

Now though God did make this covenant with them, because they were fleshly, and their present state required it, yet he did not disannul or make void the other to them, all the while their day lasted; but remembered loving-kindness and mercy towards them in it, often delivering and redeeming them for his own name's sake, pointing them also to the word in the heart, and the gracious administration thereof. But they were blinded and held captive in the earthly nature and principle, and in the law thereof, and held their marriage and union with God thereby. And see, though this administration to the Jews (wherein God did strive with them by his Spirit, and sometimes stir life, and beget a true sensibleness in many of them, calling to them for the circumcision of the heart, and pointing them to the principle of life in the heart, whereby it might be circumcised) though this advanced them far above the Heathen; yet they, through the flesh and the letter, at last fell below the very state of the Heathen, proving greater enemies to, and persecutors of, the life than they; and so the Lord brake them off from the Olive-tree into which they were ingrafted, and cut them off from the covenant which he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; whereas, thitherto (though he had often been provoked by, and sorely offended with, them), yet he had still loved them for their fathers' sake. After them, and in their stead, he chose the believing Gentiles, ingrafted them into the stock from which these were broken, letting them into a sweeter and fuller, and more spiritual and abiding state, and influences of the covenant. For here the life was manifested, and the light did shine in great beauty and clearness. And they were gathered into the true fold of the Shepherd (besides the outward state, which was also built up by the Lord, and preserved for a season among them); and they saw their standing to be by and in the grace, and were established in the grace, and could feel the good pleasure calling, the good pleasure working, the good pleasure being and doing all in them; and could cry grace, grace, to this building; and say, not for any works that they had wrought, or for their faith in, or obedience to, the light of life, which was made manifest; but of his own mercy he saved them, who wrought in them both the will and the deed of his own good pleasure, and preserved them by his power through faith (which was of his gift and begetting) unto salvation.

Yet for all this, there was something of the law or light eternal to be administered unto them, which was suitable to the natural part or first principle through which they were to travel, even until the man, or first nature, was wholly wasted; whereby some of them were in danger of falling away wholly, others of coming under the chastisement and judgment, with which the Lord pursued them, that they might not be utterly condemned with the world. Mark, therefore, this brief sum of the matter: —

1. Man fell under the first covenant: his restitution is never to be thereby, but by the second; through which God works up into a state of life and glory in the administration of his grace.
2. But in this working up of the vessel, he sees necessary to make use of the other covenant, according to the capacity that is left in man to answer it; and so as that capacity wears out, the covenant of the law wastes and passes away by degrees, and the covenant of grace succeeds and fills up the room thereof.
3. There is a great danger of falling from the life for some, as also of chastisements and judgments to others, while this capacity remains; even while the earthly nature, spirit, and principle is not worn out, by the entrance, death, and resurrection of the principle of life in the heart.

4. When the first principle is wholly dead, and the heart perfectly formed in the life, and all perfectly raised and renewed in the life; then there is no danger of falling, or fear of chastisement; but perfect life, and peace, and joy with God in his Spirit of power and glory for evermore.

5. Though God begin with man in a covenant of grace, and bring in a covenant of the law to man (suitable to his present state) only in subserviency to the covenant of grace; and would not have man stick there, but cling to him in the grace, and seek remission through the grace for his own name's sake; yet man, through the prevalency of the first principle in him (and his looking on God through that), is apt to fix on this covenant, and draw comfort or discouragement to himself from his own obedience or failings, and not live on the freeness of God's love, and the faithfulness of his heart to the soul in all conditions, for his Christ's sake.

This has been the great error of Israel (even of Israel after the flesh, and of Israel after the spirit also), that while God lays hold on them by his love, promise, mercy, and grace; yet they lay hold on him by another covenant; even their obedience to the laws he gives forth; not knowing, that the obedience to the first covenant must be a fruit of the second; and that they are not beloved or accepted for that, but that that flows into them, and is brought forth in them through the love, and through the free and powerful workings thereof in them. I say, this (that is, their obedience) is not the ground of their acceptance or being loved, so far as they are in this covenant; though as far as the other has yet an influence, it has some force in this respect. But this the eye is to pass through, and to be fixed on the other covenant, still waiting for the revealing and manifesting the riches of the mercy thereof, and to feel the washing and cleansing thereof from all the guilt, which under the remainders of the first covenant will be daily contracting, while any thing of the earthly principle and offending part is left standing.

There has been in this day a very glorious administration of life to the sons of men (after the long foregoing night), wherein both these covenants have been again administered in Spirit, suitable to the state of the persons whereto they have been administered. And because of the necessity of faith and obedience in the new covenant (both to the seed and to the man), the man is so apt to fix his eye and build his hopes upon them, and not upon the free love of him that works them in him, that he is in danger of falling from and dishonoring the free grace, which is the hope of Israel, and of losing his state, which is not sure (how far soever it be advanced in a present power and dominion), further than it is built upon and fixed in the grace. And therefore is this given forth, that the life in Israel may be sure and lasting, and that they may grow up perfectly, out of the principle of nature, into the principle of grace, and know the difference between their being united to, and living in, God, either in the fear, faith, or love, so far as they can receive or retain them; and God's living in them, and creating continually the fear, faith, and love in them, and bringing forth all the fruits thereof in and from himself.

For though the covenants are and have been still the same from the beginning, yet the manifestations of them have been still greater and greater. And a greater manifestation may yet be of the love and life of God, and the sweet, free nature of his covenant, than has hitherto been, or yet is; which Israel is to wait for and feel the need of, before it be brought forth. And though all those aforementioned (namely, of *fear, faith, and love*) are precious states, which God works his Israel up to, in and by the covenant of his grace, according to their several growths and capacities; yes, and according to which the delight

and pleasure of his soul is in them; yet the absolute assurance is only in the latter, even where the creature is so gathered into the life of God, that its state depends not at all upon what itself is, or does, but only upon what God is and will be to his freely of himself, and for his own name's sake.

This is written in love, for preservation; and not for discouragement or destruction; but that that which stands, may feel where to fix. For in the highest state that man can be advanced to, yet if any of the creaturely principle be left in him unsubdued, and not yet buried with the seed into its death, there is so far a capacity of falling; and his fall, in case the Lord do allow his feet to slip, will be the greater, by how much the higher and more exalted he was in the dominion and presence of the power, and by how much the more it was unexpected by him.

And this my heart has often said within me, and still says to a weary soul, which has felt the touches of life, and desires everlasting unity with it; yes, to all that desire to walk with God, and to abide in the power of his life in any dispensation; Keep the eye of your mind to the grace which visits you; not so much to the light which comes from the grace, as to the grace from which the light comes; and daily look for help and remission from it, as freely as you had at first. And in all losses and darknesses, and risings up of guilt and condemnation, cast yourself at the foot of it, saying in your heart, If you had not freely visited me at first, I had not set one step in the path of life; and if you do not as freely visit me still, and renew life in me daily of your own accord, and from the same love and goodness, I cannot but be liable to miscarry. Oh that I might obey every beam of your light, and every moving of your life! but I dare not undertake it. Oh that you would undertake for me my righteousness, my obedience, my love to you! My faith in you is like the morning dew, which soon passes away, and I cannot find or come at it again! Oh, raise up life from an everlasting seed, and gather my heart into it, and preserve me in it; not according to what I am or have done, or yet can be or do; but for your own name's sake, and in your love to your seed, and to your creature in and through your seed by the promise!

Thus as any grow into the covenant of grace, through the covenant of works (which is necessary to be dispensed in some measure, till the man's nature and principle be wholly worn out by it), they will find sure footing there, and building upon that, from which the soul (that cleaves to it in the virtue and nature that flows from it) can never be removed. Yes, the peace and safety of Israel in their travels (fixing here) will be greater, and their assurance greater, and their falls and the prevailings of the enemy not so dangerous (that being had recourse to, which never fails of healing that soul which lies at the foot of it, and in heart waits its season); however they may be hurried and driven about with tempests, through the violence of the enemy, and good pleasure of Him, who sees it fit for the present state of the soul, to have it thus exercised.

The intent of God, in the salvation of man, is to magnify the riches of his grace, and the freeness of his love. And this is effected, as man is broken in his natural principle and power of believing and obeying; and a seed of life freely raised up in him, and he freely gathered into it, and preserved in it. And where is the boaster here? Or where is he, who, in this state, can throw a stone at another because of his transgressions? No, no; he that is freely forgiven, and lives merely and forever by mercy alone, he is formed and brought forth in the tenderness of the bowels which begat and nourish him; and he cries mightily for the spreading of the same bowels over other sinners, waiting for the season of their visitation and gathering into the same love, and by the same powerful hand, if it may be.

O my God, bring up the power and sweetness of your life in Israel, and show mercy to all nations! Purge the earth with your fan, scatter the corruption thereof from the hearts of the sons of men, and make them the paradise of your pleasure; that you, O living God, may dwell in, and shine forth from, your temple; and it may no longer lie waste, nor the abomination of desolation defile it, to the dishonor of your name, and to the ruin and misery of your creation!

### POSTSCRIPT

SOME things are exceeding necessary for lost man to be acquainted with, in his travels from his lost estate, into the life and peace of God: as,

1. To know his lost estate and misery forever, unless the Lord pity and help him.
2. To know the light, wherewith the Lord visits the souls that sit in darkness; that he may wait for the shinings thereof, and in them travel with the leading Spirit of life, from the darkness and death of sin towards the land of the living.
3. To breathe unto the Lord, and wait to have his heart joined to the light and power of life daily, and separated from the powers of death and darkness, under which he was, and still is, a captive, but as the Lord appears for him, and delivers him.
4. To put forth all the strength of his soul and mind, and all the members of his body, in the service of the Lord. For as he is, in any measure, set free by the Lord from the service of sin; so is he to serve and obey the Lord in righteousness.
5. To wait daily to receive the strength from the Lord, wherewith he serves the Lord. For though, by the redemption of the Lord, he feels the creaturely part, in some measure, renewed and restored, and an ability received to serve righteousness, which before he had not; yet this is not so given to him, as that the Lord has it not still in his hand, who can stop or let it out at his pleasure. And happy is that man, who looks not upon himself as something because of what in any kind he has received, but feels his dependence upon the Lord.
6. To feel the grace and mercy of the Lord, in whatever he receives from the Lord, or whatever he does for the Lord. It is all of the Lord; happy is the man that sees it. It is the mercy of the Lord, that man is not consumed. It is the mercy of the Lord, that any man in any state (or degree of life and redemption) is preserved. *The mercy of the Lord endures forever, therefore is Israel safe.* This will be the song of praise in the house of the Lord forever.
7. To wait for the wasting of the man, and the raising up of the seed day by day; that that to which the covenant of works is natural, and which cannot but desire it and seek to live by it, may be worn out; and that to which the covenant of grace is as natural (if not more), and which alone lives by the promise, and through the faith, and in the grace which freely flows from the eternal fountain, may be raised up, and succeed in the place and stead thereof.

Here is safety indeed. Here is everlasting righteousness so brought in, as that it can never be removed



out of the heart more. Here everlasting life and the soul are one forever. Here is no more going into captivity; which Israel, settled in Canaan, and enjoying the sweetness and rest thereof, under the first covenant may. Here are no tears, nor sighing, nor departing from the life, nor grieving the Holy Spirit of the Lord, nor being grieved by it any more; but what the heart desires of God, and what God desires of the heart, mutually received; and the going forth, and the coming in, and the abiding, one and the same forever; the same life and power and love and eternal sweetness being all and in all forever. This is the mark of Israel, and the haven of its eternal rest, to which the Lord is leading the *poor, hungry, empty, mourning, afflicted, tossed* souls, to whom it is as sure in the love and good-will of God (and in the counsel of his heart determined thereupon), as if they were already in it.

**TO FRIENDS IN ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND,  
HOLLAND, NEW ENGLAND, BARBADOES, OR  
ANYWHERE ELSE, WHERE THE LORD GOD SHALL  
ORDER THIS TO COME, IN THE TENDER SPIRIT OF LIFE  
AND LOVE, GREETING**

**[1666]**

O FRIENDS!

IN the pure love of God, and fresh breath of his living Spirit, is it now on my heart to write unto you, in fear, in tenderness, in meltings, and true sense of spirit; and the Lord so guide my heart and words, as that they may reach the witness in the hearts of all that shall read, and may be felt by that to be purely of God, and not at all of the birth, will, or wisdom of the flesh.

I remember, I remember, O Friends! and it is in my heart to put you in remembrance of the cloudy, dismal, and dark day, wherein the Shepherd of Israel visited our souls, and what condition we were in, when he caused the light of life to shine upon our tabernacles, and to spring up in us. Oh the desolation, the desolation that our souls were in, in that day! Oh the wanderings up and down, the seekings, huntings, mournings, bitter complaints, and deep distresses for lack of our God, and for lack of the guidance of his good Spirit! Who can utter now what was then felt of the thickness of darkness, of the misery, the loss, the dreadful captivity that our poor souls were entangled and wrapped up in? Oh, how acceptable was the visitation of God then! how deep was the sense of his tender mercy in visiting! how glad was the soul then of the living path revealed! how unfeigned did it cleave unto the Lord, and embrace the measure of his life revealed inwardly to the mind! how did it fear! how did it wait! how did it watch against the enemy, and cry to the Father for his help! How beautiful were the feet, and how pleasant the visitations of them, who brought the tidings of this life and peace! What love, what unity, what embracing one another in this life, was then witnessed in the hearts of one another! and where this lives and grows to this day, oh how precious is that vessel! but where the life in any is departed from, where another thing, of another nature, has entered and been entertained

by any, there it is not so; but there the love is grown cold, the mind changed, the goodness of the Lord forgotten, and the poor soul again entangled in that which formerly it felt some release and deliverance from.

Now that the enemy would endeavor to entangle the minds of the redeemed, and to draw them back from the Lord, and his pure measure of life in the heart, towards perdition again, that is not to be questioned; it being his nature and property so to do; and that he would use not only his strength, but also his subtlety and deceivableness to effect this (his aim being at the church and redeemed of God, more than at the world); appearing as an angel of light, in motions like light, in ways like life; this is not to be doubted of either; for how else could he gain upon that, whose eye is towards, and whose aim is after, the Lord? But this is the great thing for my heart, and the hearts of Friends, to be exercised in, to wait on the Lord in his true light, clearly to discern how far we have been assaulted by this enemy, and how far the Lord has preserved us from his assaults, or allowed him to prevail upon us; for he has prevailed in former ages, under the ministration of the law in the prophets' days, and under the ministration of the gospel in the apostles' days; yes, and I must needs say, he has also prevailed in our days, on all that have not watched in the pure fear, and been preserved by the pure power of the Lord. Now does it not concern every one to look up to the Lord, to guide his heart in searching, that he may truly understand his state? That, if he can witness the preservation of the power, he may sing praise to the power; but if he has been betrayed, and come to a loss, he may seek after the power of life again, and wait for deliverance and restoring by it. For with the Lord God is mercy and bowels, and he seeks after and saves the lost, not once only, but again and again; only here is the great danger of souls, when they are ignorant of their captivity, and judge in themselves, and are guided by that which should be judged down and destroyed in them. When darkness is the light and leader in the mind, oh, where does that soul travel! How does it judge, think, act! how sure does the enemy hold it in his bonds and chains! how easily does he prejudice it against that which is of God, and for its good, and incline it to think favorably of that which only appears to be of God, but is not, and is to its hurt!

Now, Friends, there were three things on my heart this morning, which sprang up in true sense and demonstration of God's Spirit, as subtle engines which the enemy has endeavored to make use of to hurt our souls; which any that have been entangled in, have received hurt by, and those that have escaped have cause to bless the name of the preserver of Israel.

The first is this: By begetting in persons prejudices against those whom the Lord has chosen, and pleases to make use of in ministering to his people. Precious is the ministry that is in the Spirit, for the building up in life, as well as for begetting. How does the enemy strive to prejudice the world against them, that there may be no begetting to God from amongst them! And how does he also endeavor to raise prejudices amongst the begotten, that he may interrupt, and, if possible, stop their building up.

The second is this: To draw men from eying and subjecting to the present dispensation, by an earnest looking after and waiting for another, or further. The security and blessing of the soul lies in the present dispensation, in bowing to God there, in being diligent under the exercises of his spirit therein. Now that which draws the mind another way from the present exercise, from belief in the present gift, under a specious pretense of waiting for something more glorious to appear, betrays and deceives, in thus turning the mind out of the path which God holds forth and guides into, towards expectation of a path as yet to be revealed.

The third is this: Under a pretense of sticking to the enlightening and guidance of one's own measure, to set up a sense and judgment in the mind, both concerning persons, practices, and things, which is not truly of the measure, but secretly instilled into and raised up in the mind, contrary to the pure measure of life. All these have I not only seen in spirit, but been sorely assaulted with; and that they have not prevailed upon me even to destruction, is the tender mercy and kindness of the Lord unto me; and in that tenderness and love, for the preservation of others, do I write these things. And indeed I have something in my heart to say singly and nakedly concerning each of these, which the Lord guide and bless to the conditions of those who stand in need thereof.

First, Concerning those prejudices which the enemy is apt to lay before the minds of Friends concerning those whom the Lord has chosen to minister to them in the power of his truth, I shall say this: Look over the former dispensations of God; there were false prophets under the law, and false apostles and ministers in the time of that dispensation of the gospel, who did strive and labor hard to disturb, undermine and overturn the building and work of God in the spirits of his people then; but did God allow the true prophets under the law, or the true apostles, to fall and lose their ministry? And is not this present dispensation pure and living, and able to preserve both the instructors and instructed in the Lord? It is natural to the enemy to suggest such a thing; but let all that fear the Lord, and love his truth, take heed how they entertain such a suggestion. Besides, he that has felt the pure power in his heart, and waited to be carried through the work of it, and has been carried through and brought into the dominion, and set as a pillar in the temple of the Lord, it is not easy, if possible, for him to fall, the Lord having undertaken for him, that he shall *go no more forth*, as Rev. 3:12. But let me say this to you, O soul! whoever have entertained this prejudice, You, through prejudices and suggestions, judge them fallen; but do not they, in the true eternal light of the Spirit of life, see you fallen? No, if you could but retire to the pure measure that at first quickened you, might not you feel your own fall?

To the second, of drawing out the mind to look after another or further dispensation, I have this to say: Consider what this dispensation is; is it not of the seed itself? Is it not of the light, life, and power of the Father, manifested in the seed, and in the soul through the seed? Is not the sense quick, and the love pure, where this is felt? What would you have poor soul? Oh that you felt the virtue and power of this! surely you would then find that you might sit down here in the peace, purity, power, dominion, and perfection of life; for it is all in the seed, and to be revealed to you, and become yours, as you are gathered into the seed, and the seed opened in you. Besides, are there not many that have witnessed, and that can witness from God, that this is the dispensation which is to go through the whole earth? And shall it be laid aside in the beginning of its work? "If there had been a law given, which could have given life" (said the apostle) "righteousness should have been by the law." God does not change. When he has brought forth that which will do the thing, why should he change it? Now of the ability of this there are many witnesses; yes, it has brought forth life and righteousness in those that have been subject to it, and was once owned as the desire of our souls, and became a covering to our eyes, that we could look no further; our hearts, in the sense and life of truth, being satisfied that this was the very thing we had long mourned after, and waited for. Oh! that which begets another sense in any of us (under what pretense or appearance soever), let it be the abomination of our souls, that we hearken not, nor give the least entertainment to it, lest by it we are betrayed of our portion in the blessed treasure and inheritance.

To the third I say: It is a standing truth, the standard we were invited to, and to which we are to keep

forever, even the measure of life in our own vessels. This will justify us in our subjection to whatever it reveals; and its justification will stand, whatsoever any man else shall say to the contrary. But this is at unity in itself, and never opposes the motion or appearance of life in another. Now this is certain, the enemy will appear as near life and its motion as he can; and if I receive his appearance, I am not subject to the measure of life in me, but to him under his deceitful appearance. Therefore if that which appears like life in you contradict a practice or appearance of life in others (who were in the truth before you, and are in the growth thereof far beyond you), ought you not to be sober in spirit, and to wait in fear, lest you should be deceived; lest you should exalt self and the enemy in you, and not the truth; yes, lest your heart should grow hard, and your neck stiff, against those who are over you in the Lord, and so you lose the benefit of their watching over you, and counsel to you, and of God's preservation: for out of the truth, in the deceitful appearance, there is no preservation, nor true light, nor justification of life; but self-conceit, fleshly confidence, and the justification of a man's own spirit; and his wisdom then gets up, and exalts itself, as if it were the right thing. The Lord gave the measure of life to you; and the Lord also has given fathers, guides, instructors, watchmen in his Israel. These have a service from the Lord towards you, who knows that your soul has need of that service: now if the enemy can prejudice you against, and withdraw you from, the use of what you need, are you not in danger of falling and miscarriage? Do not you set up the measure of life in you (if not another thing) beyond its place, state, and growth? And can any thing grow and thrive out of the order and wisdom of God? No, no; the very measure of life itself will this way come to wither and die in you, and another thing live in its place; and the sword of the Lord will be drawn against you, and you will be cut off from the body, and also from him who is the quickener and preserver of the body. Therefore, my friends, as the enemy watches to deceive and destroy, so the Lord keep our souls in the true watch and looking up to him, who (to those that fear him) discovers the deceit, and preserves from, the snare.

And this is witnessed concerning the measure of life in the heart, and the way of its acting and operation, that it always acts in its place, even in due subjection to the Father of spirits, and to his life in others according to its growth; for there is no rent nor division in the living body; no setting up one measure of life against another measure, or one motion of life against another motion, or one practice against another; but all there is in the unity, in the love, in the tenderness, in the sense, in the peace, in the dominion, in the subjection; and that which differs or dissents from the life, interrupting the union and uniformity in the life, is not of the life; which when it is everywhere cast out, life to life will answer everywhere; which day my soul breathes and waits for, even the day wherein life alone shall live and reign in every vessel, and all the devices and snares of the enemy not be able to enter upon or catch any of God's little simple-hearted ones; but still, by the power of life rising in clearness against them, be thrown back upon the enemy, to his torment and disadvantage.

And, O dear lambs! consider how easy it is for you to mistake, err, and wander from the truth; and do not refuse the care, watchfulness, and tender counsel of those who were instrumental to beget you to, and are yet over you, in the Lord. Alas! how easy is it for the enemy to deceive your simplicity, and get between you and your life; and then you are liable to mis-see and mis-act in all you do, and to follow the enemy, as if he were your right guide; and to fight against, and resist him, who is your true leader, as if he were your enemy! The life in you is to be your guide and leader, as it grows up and receives ability, strength, and dominion from the Lord; but the heir is to be under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the Father. And the seed is meek, humble, tender, lowly, sensible of its own state and weakness, and subject to the exaltation, dominion, and pure authority of life in others, where the

Lord has so exalted it. That which is otherwise in you (which is high, exalted, conceited of itself, and not subject to every degree of life in others, according to its state) is another thing, which is not of the true kind, but only under a guise appears to you as the true; and as it gets entrance, corrupts your hearts from the true, and distills its poison into your spirits! which you believing, entertaining, and feeding upon, as if it were the true, grow up in his poisonous nature, losing the pure nature and fellowship of the body, and are traveling where you are not aware; being gone from that which first gathered, into that which, through subtlety, has deceived, appearing to you as if it was still the same, and that you still keep to it, but others are departed: whereas the thing is clean contrary in the sight of the Lord, and in the sight of those who keep to the anointing, and see with his eye. Therefore, O dear lambs and babes! what need have we to wait in tender sense for the Lord's preservation of us in that nature, spirit, and life, whereof we were begotten, and wherein we were taught, that there we may still learn and keep to the true teaching, in the innocency and simplicity of love, and not hearken to the wisdom and reasonings of another spirit, who lies at watch to catch the mind with his wiles, and draw from the true thing. Mark how we learned at first: was it not in a nature, by a secret instinct and inclination of our minds towards the life, and the path, ways, and practices thereof, whereinto the body, which before had been gathered, was led and walked before us? The same life, when it makes us part of the flock, brings us into the same footsteps; and there we walk with them, in the unity of the same life, and sense of the same leader; but if the enemy can at any time draw us from this sense, and from the belief and practices or practice which we received in this sense, even out of the limits of this nature and its naturalness, how easy is it for him to persuade us to question right things in our minds and understandings, as if they were wrong (darkening our eye and causing us to overlook and forget the leading and motion which we had in the true sense and nature from the anointing itself), and so confidently to think and conclude, that we took up such or such a practice by imitation, and have held it up in form. Whereas the Lord, who forgets not what and how he has wrought in us, knows that we took it up in the sense and leading of his truth, and are now tempted from that in the reasoning subtlety, which we formerly practiced in the true innocent simplicity. And thus getting into us a belief and entertainment of his snare, he draws us from that which at first led us, and from the practices we were at first led into, to hearken to him, and follow him, who instructs us in a way we were not instructed in before while the Lord instructed us; and so destroys his nature, and the work of his Spirit in us, dividing us both from the head and living body; and so our standing, growth, sense, and judgment is altered, and we are neither to the Lord what we were before, nor is he to us what he was before; for he hates that spirit in all its appearances, and cannot have unity with the souls that are entangled by it. Therefore, dear friends, as we prize our gathering to, and abiding with, the Lord, and the enjoyment of his love, peace, joy, and presence at present, and the crown and inheritance of life with him forever; so let us fear, so let us watch, so let us cry unto him, to be preserved by him, which gathered us in that into which he gathered, and not by any means be betrayed (through subtlety of the enemy) into another thing, where the life of the body (and union with the body) cannot possibly be witnessed, nor the true justification of the Lord; but only an appearing justification of a man's own spirit, which must afterwards come under condemnation. You, who are in the living and true sense, will feel my love, tenderness, and faithfulness in what I write; and you who are not, the Lord God of bowels pity, and recover you out of the snare and wrong judgment, that you may feel it; and feeling that which is true, may be joined to it, drinking of its virtue and preservation, and live; which is the earnest desire of my soul to the Lord, who am

Your brother and companion in the tribulation and mercies which attend the living,

From Aylesbury prison, the 14th of the Fifth month, 1666.

### POSTSCRIPT

DEAR friends, brethren, lambs, and plants of the Most High, it is in my heart to add one thing, which I have been deeply exercised about, and have received help from the Lord in, wherein I am truly willing, in faithfulness and tenderness, to be helpful to any of you that stand in need thereof, as the Lord shall give me ability and opportunity. It is this: —

Among other things, wherewith the enemy endeavors to reproach those whom the Lord has sent forth among us, he makes use of this, as if they lacked bowels and tenderness. Now, friends, I beseech you to consider it, that the enemy may not thus enter you. Did not the Lord consider of his work, and whom he sent forth in this his service and labor of love? Does he not know the need of bowels and tenderness in them, and would he not especially furnish them therewith? Yes, have they not bowels from and in the Lord? And does not the eye that is open see and acknowledge their bowels, and bless the Lord for them? I have lately been often warmed in the true sense of it, and have felt that therein I have not blessed his name in vain; but the thing is so in the sense of truth, and so acknowledged before the Lord in that which errs not: only as true judgment and severity has its proper place in the Lord, as well as his mercy, and is made use of by him towards his people, as all by experience know; so must it be in them also that bear his image; who must know, in his wisdom and authority, whom to smite with his rod and sharp reproofs, and when and whom to cherish in the tenderness and meltings of love. And this is also love and tenderness (and has sweet and precious virtue and usefulness in it, both for the recovery and restoring of those whose condition calls for the sharp stroke, and for the preservation of the rest), though it does not so appear to that which by no means can endure the judgment, but would have the tenderness and mercy which belongs not to it; for the mercy is to be broken, to the humble, to the meek, to the afflicted, and bowed-down ones under the sense of judgment; not to the stiff and stubborn against the righteous judgments and testimonies of the Lord. And, my friends, consider, could the Lord carry on his glorious work in the hearts of his children without his judgments? Or can they who are sent by him possibly carry on his work among his people, without making use of his pruning-knife, to cut off that which sprouted out unnaturally and unseasonably, which (if it be let alone) will draw away the sap from that which should be fed and nourished with it? Dear friends, the Lord give you a true sense, that in his light, life, wisdom, and presence, you may justify what is of him, discerning between things that differ; and not call any thing that is evil (as the tenderness which is out of him is) good; nor any thing that is good (as the judgment and severity which is of him is) evil; but may rightly distinguish between the nature of things, knowing every thing that is of God, and owning it in its place.

Aylesbury prison, the 29th of the Sixth month, 1666

# ONE MORE TENDER VISITATION

TO

THE MEN OF THIS GENERATION

SENT TO THEM IN BOWELS OF LOVE AND TENDER COMPASSION BEFORE THEIR  
DAY BE OVER

[1666]

**Oh that those who read this might read with a right understanding, and have a true sense of what is here proposed for the good of their souls!**

IF there be a God, and if this God has let down a principle of life from himself into the hearts of the sons of men, to gather them out of the world unto himself by; and if we have been directed to, and enlightened by, this principle, and have heard his voice, and been gathered to him in it, and therein have been taught his true spiritual worship, and drawn out of the worships, fashions, customs, and ways of the world, who are estranged from God, and walk in their own wisdom, satisfying the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind, and doing what is right in their own eyes, — I say, if it be indeed so with us, then that which any do against us, in this respect, they do against God. The risings of heart against us, the hard words and reproaches, the contriving to destroy or root us out of the land, the making and executing sharp laws against us, etc., all this, and whatever else is done against us on this occasion, must needs be done against him.

And what will this produce? Will it not also engage the wisdom and power of the Lord against you? He may let us suffer long, and let you be hardened against us, as if we were not of God, by the slips and foolishness of such who have seemed to be of us, but have not kept to his truth; yet still those that keep to the Spirit and truth of God, are of God, and he is tender of them. And if he that touched Israel after the flesh, touched the apple of his eye, what does he that touches his spiritual Israel? We are content and quiet under what the Lord allows to befall us from you; but you will find, in the end, it will not be well for you to deal so with us. The Lord has a spiritual crown, dignity, and dominion in the hearts of many in this nation; why should he not enjoy it? Why should not men let him enjoy his heavenly rule, who gives to them their earthly, and who can take it from them when he pleases? See Dan. 4:32. and 35.

Therefore, my dear countrymen (and you especially that are in authority), consider, oh consider before it be too late! I hope, I hope (though the provocations have been very great) that it is not yet too late for many of you to find a place of repentance and remission with the Lord. If you can plead ignorance before the Lord, and that you have not known what you have done herein, he pities that, if you yet hearken to his counsel and reproof, and return unto him. He has power to destroy this nation; he has power to do what he will in this nation. Oh! fear before him, and take heed of fighting against him before whom none can stand.

Alas! if you knew what we were doing, while you are afflicting and persecuting us for our subjection to the Lord, surely it could not but melt and overcome you; even how we have been mourning and wrestling many times with our God, in earnest prayers and supplications to him for you; not that we might escape your wrath (which he enables us to bear), but that you might escape his fury, and terrible indignation, which we know is ready to break forth, and that you will not be able to bear it, when it does break forth; but it will pursue, overtake, break to pieces, and scatter, and there will be none to deliver.

Are not these things serious? Are they not true? Are they not written in love? Why should they not take place in you? Oh! come out of the circle and mist of darkness, that you may see the truth of them. If you be not in the nature of Christians, do not deceive yourselves, and provoke God, in taking the name unto you. If you be true Christians, do not judge or walk as men, even in and according to the wisdom of the earthly principle; but feel that principle which is of God, and in that wait for, and learn to hear and know the voice of God, and that will lead (out of all profane ways, out of all superstitious ways, yes, out of all the ways that man's fallen wisdom has taught and erred in) into the way of true and sound judgment, where the true reformation within will be witnessed by you, and the true reformation without brought forth through you (thus acting), and no separation or rent from you heard of by them that fear the Lord.

But till then, the principle of God, the life of God in the heart, the pure wisdom which is from above, cannot own that which is from below, in its fall, in its separation from the true; but must remain distinct from it, and a faithful witness against it. And I say again and again, in the love and fear of God unto you, take heed how you persecute this in any, or any because of this: for it will lie more heavy upon you in the day of God's pleading with you, and executing his righteous judgments, than all your other sins. If you have ears to hear, oh! hear, and cast up your accounts, making your peace with God before his wrath break forth against you like a flood, which none can stop.

Feel my love, and the meltings of my spirit for you before the Lord; and be not hardened against the truth, lest you remember my words, and the warnings of many of the precious servants of the Lord, to the increase of your grief, and not to your benefit, in the day of your calamity.

BY ISAAC PENINGTON.



# CONCERNING THE CHURCH OR OF THE CHURCH STATE UNDER THE GOSPEL

WHEREBY IT MAY APPEAR

What a miserable APOSTASY from the TRUTH has overspread and covered the Earth for many Ages and Generations, and how gross and thick the Darkness yet lies upon it; though the Light of GOD, in his tender Mercy, has broke forth and shined upon the People of his gathering, and through them has also visited the World

The Guidance of this in my heart was particularly and chiefly towards the Papists; but I afterwards had a true sense that it also extended to the state of such Protestants as had not waited on the Lord, for him, in his wisdom and power, to rear up his own building, but had ventured to build of themselves, and so had reared up Churches in the same spirit of error, darkness, and apostasy, which they seemed to depart from: against all which the Lord will fight, and all which he will break down, in the day of the revelation of the glorious Light and Power of his Truth, which will overcome, subdue, and reign over the earth; not after the manner of men, but in the heavenly dominion of his life.

Written in AYLESBURY Prison, about the middle of Sixth month, 1666

BY ISAAC PENINGTON

WHEREUNTO ARE ANNEXED SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE ETERNAL  
JUDGMENT, AS IT IS EXPRESSED BY CHRIST, MAT. 25:31. TO THE END OF THE  
CHAPTER.

## PREFACE

BECAUSE the corruption of the Christian doctrine and worship has been great (yes, indeed very great) since the days of the apostles; and the judgments also are to be very great, because of this corruption; even dreadful woes, plagues, cups of wrath, and thunders unutterable, as is expressed in the book of the Revelations; therefore, that men may avoid the terrible wrath of God, which is breaking and to break forth, by discerning and forsaking that which his wrath is against, — therefore, I say, in tender bowels was it in my heart to discover something of that which the Lord has made manifest to me (among many others) concerning the creeping in of this corrupt state, and its getting up after the days of the apostles, with its continuance to this day; that men and churches may consider their state, see their nakedness, and look after the pure garment; that they may be clothed with the Spirit of the Lord, and found in the righteousness thereof, that so they may stand boldly before him, when the transgressors and hypocrites (of all sorts) shall have their fig-leaf coverings ripped off, and lie open to the strokes of his indignation. And this I say to all: take heed of two things in this day of the Lord's love and vengeance; take heed of retaining or setting up any thing which the Lord is coming forth against; and take heed of slighting or appearing against that which the Lord is preparing to set up. The

appearance of his Spirit, the shining of his day, is precious, even in the meanest glimmerings of it. Oh! who shall be guiltless before him, who defends or sets up any thing of man's will or wisdom (his sun, moon, and stars, in all their glory, being to fall and lose their shining), or who debases the lowest appearance of his seed! And if the Jews suffered so deeply for refusing and despising Christ's appearance in the flesh, what will light on those who refuse and despise his appearance in Spirit? I know this, that Christians now overlook and slight this, as the Jews did that, and by the same snare, even by a prejudice they have drunk in, that this is contrary to the Scriptures, as the Jews then did conclude, that that coming of Christ then was not agreeable to, but different from, what the Scriptures had said concerning his coming. But what said Christ then? "Wisdom is justified of her children." They who then were of the spirit, and in the spirit, knew the voice of the bridegroom then. And such also know it now, and rejoice in it; though the wise in another wisdom (according to the Scriptures as they think) refuse and disdain it; and not knowing the righteousness of Christ in spirit, set up a righteousness of their own in the flesh: for their believing (and applying to themselves the righteousness of Christ) out of the true limits of life, according to their own apprehension of things, is no other. And this must fall. Man's knowledge of scriptures, the faith of man, through his own apprehensions, must fall, and man appear naked underneath, that the glorious righteousness of Christ in Spirit, and the precious covering thereof, may be magnified over all. And in this light of life, and newness of nature in Christ, runs the blood which cleanses, and not elsewhere. It runs not according to men's notions, but in its own life, virtue, and power in the heart; where (where it is livingly felt) the iniquity is washed away, the sin is gone, the everlasting righteousness appears; yes, the water springs, which washes and keeps clean continually. Away with your notions, and empty husks, O several sorts of professors! come to the thing itself, or rather wait on the Lord to be led to it, that you may feel the seed, the pure seed, the living seed, the Holy One of God, and may know its planting and growth in you, and your unclothing and emptying of all else, that you may be clothed upon, and filled with it. And in the sense of it, and unity with it, you will own and love what comes from it, and rejoice in all the springings of its light, either within or without.

## **OF THE CHURCH STATE UNDER THE GOSPEL**

THE Jews' church state under the law was precious; who, walking with God according to the covenant of the law, were a holy people, nigh and dear unto God above all other people. But they provoked him so continually and grievously, that instead of blessings, they drew plagues upon themselves, and were, at last, by his righteous judgments, made desolate, and cut off from being any longer his select nation and people.

The church state of the Christians under the gospel is much more precious and glorious, they being gathered into the substance of that, whereof the Jews' state had but the shadow. The presence of God, the manifestation of his life and power is more inward and bright among them; their union with him more close, their communion and joy more full, he tabernacling among them, dwelling and walking with them, and advancing them into the state of sons and daughters; whereas the law state was but a state of servitude. And their standing also is more firm; the covenant wherein they stand being more able to hold them together with God than the other was. The standing of the other was by the works of the law, which they were to observe and live. The standing of these is in the faith, which is from the power, which works their works in them and for them.

Yet, as they are gathered in the faith, so their standing is in the faith, and out of it they cannot be preserved. So that (before they are established) there is a possibility of their fall from the faith, wherein their standing is, and from the power which preserves. And if they so fall, they are liable to be cut off, as the Jews were, as their apostle tells them. Rom. 11:20,21,22. In the fear, in the humility before the Lord, in keeping to the faith, their safety is; but if they become high-minded, because of their state and church privileges; if they think their standing so sure, as that they are out of the danger of falling, then they are out of the fear, out of the humility, out of the faith which preserves; and being out of the preservation, must needs fall, and so continuing, must needs be cut off.

Now the same apostle does not only warn them to take heed of falling from the faith, but afterwards expressly foretells of a falling away, even that there must come such a thing amongst them also; yes, and of such a falling away from the truth and power of life, as should give antichrist advantage to get into God's temple, and sit there as God, taking upon him the power and authority, as if he had the true power and authority of God. 2 Thess. 2:3,4. And what does he then? Does he not corrupt all, even as God's power and presence purifies and preserves all? And as he shows himself as God, so does he not also show forth his church as God's church? Yes, it goes on in the world as God's. All that drink of his spouse's cup take it to be so; who are very many and great ones, even kings and inhabitants of the earth, peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, Rev. 17:2. 15. and chap. 18:3. and none are able to discern that it is not so, but those that are anointed with the true eye-salve, which gives to see through his deceits. 1 John 2:20. For he comes "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;" 2 Thess. 2:9,10. he makes the church (after he has got possession of it, and made it his, sitting as God in it) appear as like the true church as possibly he can, that he may hold up his mystery of deceit in the world, which if once discerned, would soon fall, and come to nothing. 2 Thess. 2:7. Rev. 17:5.

To open these things a little more fully and further from the Scriptures, that they who yet cannot read otherwise may read them there, and come in some measure to the acknowledgment of the truth, and wait for the power from on high, from which is the true faith (wherein is the true church and its standing), for lack of which the world is become a wilderness; full indeed of profession, but very empty of the nature and life of Christianity.

Christ tells his disciples, that false christs and false prophets should come, and deceive many; yes, that they should prevail so far as, if it were possible, to deceive the very elect. Matt. 7:15. and chap. 24:11. 24. The Lord God has sent forth his truth, and now after it he allows to go forth a power of deceit, a mighty power, even having all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness in it. 2 Thess. 2:9,10,11. And it works according to its power, it gathers all its own everywhere. Not one, but he that is of the elect seed, can stand before it. Now the reason why God allowed this to go forth, was in judgment. Men had dallied with the truth, taken up a form of godliness, and rejected the power; therefore God withdraws from the form, and allows the unclean spirit to enter it, and the uncircumcised nature of man to shelter itself there. It arose also from the devil's subtlety, who, finding himself dispossessing of his kingdom, played this master-piece, both to save what he could at present, and to recover the rest again in process of time. He (in his apostles and ministers) takes upon him the profession of Christianity, sending them forth as the ministers of righteousness; 2 Cor. 11:13,15. but for all that, they were still of the worldly nature, of the worldly root, spirit, and principle; and so by them he brings forth Christianity (or the profession and observation of the Christian religion) in such a way as would please the worldly mind and nature; and bringing it forth so, he gathers to him all that were not

gathered and preserved by the power, and so becomes the greater body and church in view, and the rest (as to the outwardness of their church state) are made to give way, and retire into the power, out of their former place and station in the world. Rev. 12.

Now as Christ had said that false christs and false prophets should come; so John said they were come; 1 John 2:18. and also showed from where they came, "They went out from us." ver. 19. They were such as came into the form among us, but were not begotten of the life, nor subject to the power with us. And there were many of them, chap. 4:1. and such they were as had a great power of deceit, and came therewith to seduce them. 1 John 2:26. Therefore he bids them, in the unction which they had received, ver. 27. which searches and discerns all, "try the spirits." If their spirit (or the spirit that is in them) confess Christ (who is the power of the endless life, the sum, substance, and end of all that which shadowed forth life), they are of God. chap. 4:2. But if their spirit confess not Christ come in the flesh, though they may seem ever so much to preach him, they are not of God. ver. 3. Now whose spirit confesses Christ? Surely his only that is subject to him. He that preaches Christ in words, and denies him in works, whose works are not wrought in Christ, nor brought forth by Christ, his confession is but outward, but formal; it is no true confession. It is but the confession of his mouth, not of his spirit; and he is, in the sight of God, not a confessor, but a denier, of him: and whoso is enabled by God to try spirits, and waits in his light and anointing to try such, finds him to be so, and notwithstanding all his fair words and speeches of Christ, and his pretending to be his minister. Rev. 2:2. For men with fine words, and fair speeches may deceive the hearts of the simple; but they cannot deceive those to whom God gives ability to try spirits. Could the devil deceive Christ, when he said "You are the son of God"? No; Christ knew his spirit to be against him, notwithstanding those words. And can the ministers of antichrist deceive the elect of God, when they preach up Christ, in words, to be the Savior and Redeemer, and yet own not that life and power which saves, but persecute it wherever they find it? No; the same Spirit of Christ in them discerns quite through their words to their spirit. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice." John 10:27. Man may be deceived, and caught in the snare; but the elect, the sheep, know the voice of the Shepherd from the voice of the stranger. If the stranger say, Christ is the Son of God; though he believes, and owns the thing, yet they receive it not from his mouth. Well; from where come these false prophets and false christs? "They are of the world." That is their root. From there they come. They are of the worldly spirit, the worldly wisdom, the worldly nature, only clothed outwardly with a profession and show of the doctrine and practices of Christ and his apostles. And what do they do? "They preach worldly things." They suit their doctrine to the worldly nature, principle, and spirit. And what is their success? "The world hears them." 1 John 4:5. The earthly wisdom in man falls in with them, judges them to be right, owns them, sets up their way of Christianity and worship in the world; and thus the world become Christians. Those which came in the name of Christ, the world could not receive. ("He that knows God hears us;" not the world. 1. John 4:6.) There were but a few, in comparison, gathered here and there then; a few in one place a few in another. The doctrine that comes forth in the power scatters the worldly part. Man's wisdom, man's nature, cannot receive it, in the love and life of it. But when these false christs and false prophets come, the world can turn Christians; then a whole city, or a whole nation, can presently become a church. Why so? These come in that which the world can receive, which their wisdom can answer, fall in with, and subject to. These can bring forth a cross, which the world can like, fall down, and worship; but the cross of Christ they cannot; for that crucifies and slays the worldly nature, wherever it is felt, taken up, and subjected to. The way of life is strait and narrow, and few there be that can walk therein; but a broader way more may walk in. The true church is not easily found or entered into; but the false is wider and

far larger; yes, desirable to the flesh. The true church is circumspect, will admit none but in the way of God's wisdom and power; but the false church prostitutes and thrusts herself upon all. She meets men in the streets, and forces them into her bed; whereas the voice of the true church is, wait for the preparation, for the being changed by that which gives entrance into the truth; for the builder of the church is God, Heb. 3:4 (he builds this house by Christ, ver. 6. as by Moses he built the house under the law) and he is the ladder to the building. Acts 2:47.

So Paul also, writing to Timothy, tells him of perilous times in the last days. 2 Tim. 3:1. For when the last days come, and the antichrists and false prophets appear, then men are in great danger of being deceived, and of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Then he that is not in the truth, but only in the form and outward appearance, will be swallowed up by the deceit, and take up his dwelling in the form without the power; for so says the apostle concerning them, ver. 5 they have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it. And all manner of wickedness will shelter itself under this form; *Self-love, covetousness, boastings, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, unthankfulness, unholiness, etc.*, ver. 2,3,4. and indeed what not? For what is so evil, which cannot shelter itself under that form of religion and profession, where there is not the true power and life of religion to resist and subdue it?

Now mark; When these antichrists and false prophets had got up into a body and strength, gaining authority and credit in the world, what did they then do, but endeavor wholly to crush and suppress the truth, with those that abode still in it? Then the dragon, with his angels, fights with Michael and his angels. They had still been fighting with the apostles and ministers of Christ, endeavoring to disparage them, and eat out their esteem in the churches, as 2 Cor. 11. but they could not prevail; Satan, in all his enterprises, fell down, like lightening, before the glory and power of Christ in his apostles and ministers. But when the apostasy increased, and the churches provoked their preserver, growing cold in love, and faint in faith (being lifted up with their gifts, thinking highly of themselves, and their standing to be firm), and many received not the love of the truth, but only a profession of it for by-ends, etc., then the Lord began to threaten some with the removal of their candlestick, and did afterwards proceed in judgment, even to let the false prophets and antichrist prevail, and strong delusions enter, that they who had dallied with the truth, might be frustrated of the salvation they expected by it, meeting with a lie (which destroys) in the stead of it. 2 Thess. 2:10,11,12. And so God, who before built up, in his jealousy and indignation afterwards threw down men abiding not in the faith, nor in the power, but in the form and outward profession, which (separated from the power) the Lord abhors. What he loves, he secures for himself (his holy temple, his holy altar, his spiritual worshippers); and what he regarded not (which was the form and outward ordinances, now polluted) he gave to the heathenishly-professing spirit; and there they worship, and magnify their own state, prizing it by its outward glory and appearance, and not by a right sense and knowledge of it in the truth. Read these things outwardly, in the letter (or rather wait upon God that you may read them, who caused them to be written to that end, to be read and understood), Rev. 12. and chap. 11:1,2. where the battle of the dragon is related, and God's taking down his building, and disposing of it according to his pleasure.

Again mark; Antichrist gets into the temple (upon the falling away), sits there as God, ruling, giving laws, and exacting obedience in the name of God: but when was this to be? In the last times, 1 Tim. 4:1 (which would be very perilous, through the power of wickedness and deceit, then getting up). When

did those times begin? They began in the apostles' days. The mystery of iniquity was then at work. 2 Thess. 2:7. Yes, says John, "it is the last time;" by the coming of the antichrists and deceivers we know it to be so. 1 John 2:18. Christ said, they should come; John said, they are come; Paul saw them then at work in the mysterious power of darkness. But they could not carry their work through, the Spirit and power of Christ in his apostles stood so much in the way; but after they were removed out of the way, antichrist got up his mystery of deceit quickly. Well, how long does he reign? Even till the very coming of Christ in his Spirit and power; yes, there is some remainder of him till the very brightness of his coming. 2 Thess 2:8. This mystery of iniquity has power and authority over all the wisdom of man; but the appearance of Christ, in the spirits of his people, has power over it, and torments it, by opening its nakedness, and causing its darkness to appear; and the brightness of his coming shall quite dissolve and scatter it. For it is but a mist of darkness, it has no being in the truth, nor can it stand before the truth. So Babylon is found standing at the very last; just before the breaking forth and coming down of the New Jerusalem, and the marriage of the lamb with his bride. Rev. 29:6,7. What is Babylon? A mystery of iniquity, in a form of godliness. A profession, a people, a religion, that seem to set up Christ; but set up another nature, spirit, and power in his stead. A church that is not of God, not formed in his divine wisdom, not brought forth in his light and power, and in the season of his will; but of man, and by man, that can go no further in religion than the number of a man. Zion, under the gospel, is not literal, but mystical; and so is Babylon also, who is the mother of fornications, who teaches her daughters to adulterate from the life and from the power, who never knew the marriage of the Lamb in his Spirit, nor his pure bed of life, but enter into the chambers and bed of a strange spirit.

Question. But what is the state of the church all this while, from this hour of corruption, till the coming of Christ in his Spirit and power?

Answer. A state of desolation, a state of widowhood, a wilderness state; where her living body is not discerned by the vulturous eye; but her children, whenever they appear witnessing for her, are persecuted, hunted, afflicted, and sometimes slain. This bloody church, which comes from the red dragon, and rules in his spirit and nature, drinks the blood of the lambs and martyrs of JESUS, who, in their several ages, are his faithful witnesses, and love not their lives unto the death. And here the truth, and that which has appeared of the true church in the world, for ages and generations (ever since this night of the dragon's and antichrist's darkness, and his sitting in the temple under an appearance of light), has only been to be found, even among the persecuted ones, who have been dear to God; of whom the professing world has not been worthy, no, not at all, of that heavenly life, spirit, and power, which dwelt in them, and through which they have been able to testify for the truth, and bear up their heads against the malice and persecutions of their enemies. Rev. 12:11,17,etc., and chap. 11:3,7. chap. 13:15,16,17. chap. 14:12 chap. 17:6.

Now, for a close: There are a few questions in my heart, briefly to propound and answer, which it may please God to reach forth to his witness in such, who, in distrust of themselves and their own wisdom, shall wait upon him for understanding. The questions are these. First, What a true church is? Secondly, How a true church may be known? Thirdly, how a true church may continue so? Fourthly, How a church may lose its state and being? Fifthly, When a church has lost its state and being?

Question 1. What is a true church?

Answer. A true church is a truly spiritual body, gathered out of the world, or worldly nature and spirit, into God's Spirit and nature, there to live and walk with him, and worship him in spirit and truth, and for him to tabernacle in and walk among, and fill with his glorious presence and powerful life. Eph. 2:21,22. 1 Pet. 2:5. John 4:23. 2 Cor. 6:16. It is not the profession of the truth makes a true believer; nor is it a company of professors makes a true church; but their proceeding from, and union with, the truth itself; and their abiding in the life and power of that which they profess. Eph. 4:16.

Question 2. How may a true church be known?

Answer. There must be something in man to know them, and something in them to be known by. That in man which knows them, must be something of God in him; for that which is of man cannot measure or judge of the things of God. As the worldly wisdom and spirit could not know Christ formerly; so neither now can it know his church. Many may appear to be churches of Christ, and yet not be so; and that which is so, may not appear so. In this case, who shall distinguish? Not he that judges according to the appearance, but he that judges the righteous judgment. Therefore it is not for every man to take upon him to judge which is the true church; but first to wait upon God to be led into that, and in some measure born of that, which gives ability to judge. "Wisdom is justified of her children;" but of others she is condemned for foolishness, and the foolishness justified in her stead.

And there is also something for the church to be known by, which is that which distinguishes her from all other assemblies and gatherings; which is the nature, life, and presence of the head with her and in her. This none has, but the true church, the gathered body, the separate body of the Lamb, which is of his flesh, and of his bones. Eph. 5:29,30. Her husband is with her, his life is in her: for she is a living body, or gathering of living stones. So that find the true life of the Lamb anywhere, there is something of his church; find a gathering in his life, name, and power, there is his church, and he also. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18;20.

Question 3. How may a true church continue so?

Answer. By abiding in the Spirit, life, and power, that gathered and built them up into a church. This first gave them their being; and this still preserves them in their being, if they abide till they be perfected and established; but falling or being cut off from this, they wither, die, and come to nothing. Even as a disciple, departing out of the vine, making shipwreck of the faith, loses that which made him a disciple or Christian; John 15:6. so a church, departing from the Spirit and life of what they profess, languish by degrees, even till their life be wholly extinct, and they wholly lose that state and being which they had by their gathering. Thus the churches in Asia, beginning to corrupt, grew formal, lukewarm, dead, etc., were warned to repent and strengthen that which remained, lest they were spewed out, the candlestick removed, etc. Rev. second and third chapters.

Question 4. How may a church lose its state and being?

Answer. Several ways; as first, By departing from the truth and simplicity of the gospel; letting in doctrines, principles, observations, customs, and practices, which are not of the pure Spirit, nor in the unity of it; but from the corrupt spirit, and which corrupt the minds of them that are entangled in them. Corrupt doctrines, corrupt principles, corrupt practices, etc., they all have of the nature and

poison of death in them; and as they prevail, they bring death upon, and engage God against, that person or church where they get dominion. See what danger one corrupt doctrine of the Nicolaitans brought the Church of Pergamos into, even of God's coming forth with his sword and fighting against her. Rev. 2:16. And if God, who is the defender of his church, himself fight against her, how shall she stand?

2. By negligence and sluggishness in the truth; by this means also life may languish and extinguish by degrees, even till death come wholly over and swallow it up. Rev. 3:1,2,3. If the first love do but abate and wax cold, iniquity will be abounding, Matt. 24:12. and the church will be in danger of losing its candlestick. Rev. 2:4,5.

3. By God's withdrawing his presence and power, for these or such causes above said, which nourishes and preserves. For the life of the church, as well as of a disciple, is fed and nourished from the fountain or vine; and if it miss of the nourishment, its life cannot long continue. The Jews may keep up their sacrifices, and reading of the law; but yet they are a dead people to God, after their cutting off from the olive-tree. And the Gentiles may worship in the outward court, and keep up the outward ordinances, after God's rejecting and cutting them off also, and be as dead to God therein, as the Jews in theirs. Rev. 11:1,2. and Rom. 11:21,22.

4. By their listening and yielding to the power of the enemy, who quickly deceives (with his lies, instead of the truth), destroys, and lays waste such buildings, where God in his just judgment lets him forth upon them. For the gates of hell will prevail against that building, which the arm of Christ is not stretched forth (or ceases) to defend. And as the defense of every particular building upon the rock, is in its abiding there, and subjecting to the head; so the defense of larger gatherings or churches, is no otherwise. As their union and gathering is, so is their standing; that is, in believing and giving up to their leader; hearkening to his voice, and obeying him only. But if they hearken to a stranger, if they hear another voice than his, if they follow another spirit, letting in his lies and deceit, they cannot keep their standing in the truth; but in so doing depart from it, and lose the promise and protection of it. For as before, by God's gathering them from the spirit of darkness, they became his, and met with his power, presence, and blessing; so afterwards being again, by any subtlety of deceit, gathered from the truth itself, into some likeness and appearance of it, which the enemy has formed, they become the enemy's synagogue, not God's church; into which he enters again, and dwells there, in that likeness and appearance. And this house, which was once cleansed, swept, and garnished by God, being again recovered and repossessed by the enemy, becomes worse, and more filthy in the nature of wickedness, than it was before. What is more pure, glorious, and excellent, than a true church of God, which is sanctified by his Spirit, and holds forth the virtues and pure nature of his life in the world? What is more filthy and abominable, and where does Satan more strongly dwell and act, than in that which pretends to be a church, and is not? The promises of God are only to the seed absolutely; but not so to any man, or society of men, but as, in the tender mercy of the Lord, they are gathered into, and preserved in, the seed, in the way that the Lord has chosen and appointed. For the way of life is glorious and perfect, and the Lord will honor it; so that those that expect to reap salvation from him, must walk and abide with him therein; for besides him there is no Savior; and besides his way, there is no way of salvation, either for any man or church.

Question 5. When has a church lost its state and being?



Answer. When its nature is changed; when it is overcome by, and gathered into, another power and spirit, than it was first gathered into by the Lord; when its standing is not in the Spirit, nor after the Spirit, but in the flesh, and after the flesh; when its ways are carnal, its weapons carnal; when its hedge or wall is broken down, and the spirit of the world not kept out, but entered into it, and become one with it. Then it is no longer of God, and separate from the world; but one in nature, state, and being with the world. Rev. 2:9.

These things are written in the love and good-will of God, that men may see that spirit, which has bewitched and entangled them from him, with the ways and false appearances wherein it has entangled them; and may wait on the Lord (in truth of heart) for his light, guidance, and power to deliver them; that so they may come into his holy land, and within the limits of his holy city, out of all polluted lands and buildings, where his holy nature dwells not, and the pure dominion of his holy life and power is not felt; that they may sing praise to him among his redeemed ones, for his precious redemption; who is breaking the bonds of captivity, and redeeming his out of all the lands and countries, wherein they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day; glory in the highest to his name for evermore!

### **SOME QUERIES TO THE PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY, TO PROVOKE THEM TO JEALOUSY FOR THEIR GOOD**

Query 1. HAVE you eat of the bread and drank of the wine in the Father's kingdom, which they that have received the kingdom, and are in the kingdom, eat and drink of?

Query 2. Have you known the heavenly Jerusalem, and are you come to it, as the Christians were in the apostles' days? Heb. 12;22.

Query 3. Are you in him that is true, and your churches and gatherings in God, and in the name of his Son? Is your being and dwelling in the eternal life?

Query 4. Have you received the promise of the Father, even the excellent Spirit of the Son?

Query 5. Have you the true faith? Do the living waters spring out of your bowels, according as the Scriptures have said? "He that believes on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38. and chap. 4:14.

Query 6. Does God tabernacle in you? is his dwelling among you? does he walk up and down in your spirits, and sup with you, and you with him?

Query 7. Are you in the new covenant? taught of God, so as you need no man to teach you? and your sins so blotted out, according to the covenant, as to hinder no good things from you?

These things were spoken of in the law and prophets, to be fulfilled, witnessed, and enjoyed under the power and life of the gospel; which is not a state of the names and foretelling of things, as under the law, but of the presence and enjoyment of the things themselves; and so far as you fall short of them, you shall fall short of the state of Christianity.

## SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE ETERNAL JUDGMENT

AS IT IS EXPRESSED BY CHRIST, MATTHEW 25:31. TO THE END OF THE CHAPTER.

Observation 1. THE condition of Christ here in this world, in many of his members in their several ages and generations. He is *hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison*; yes, indeed, what is there of misery, shame, and reproach, which he is not exposed to; or which they are not exposed to, who entertain him as their Lord and King, and are faithful in their obedience and subjection to him? ver. 35, 36, 43.

Observation 2. The notice Christ takes of what is done in this kind, or not done in this kind, to any of his suffering members; which extends to all, even the very least. "Insomuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me." ver. 40. "Insomuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me." ver. 45.

Observation 3. The honorable esteem Christ has of his poor suffering members, with what eye of contempt soever the world looks upon them, yet he looks upon them as his brethren. ver. 40.

Observation 4. The different carriages of persons towards Christ, in this his low condition in his members. Some gave him meat, some gave him drink; some took him in, some clothed him, some visited and came unto him; ver. 35, 36. others did none of these things unto him. ver. 43.

Observation 5. The different judgment Christ passes upon these, according to their different carriages. The one he pronounces *blessed of his Father*, judging them to the inheritance of a kingdom of eternal life. ver. 34. 46. The other he pronounces *cursed*, and adjudges to everlasting punishment in the fire of his wrath. ver. 41. — 46.

Observation 6. The ground or reason why those, who did not minister to him, neglected him, which was their ignorance of him. They saw indeed, and knew several persons to be in such kind of conditions, but they did not know that it was Christ which suffered in them; this is implied in their answer to him. ver. 44. "When saw we you ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto you?" ver. 45.

Observation 7. That it will not excuse men from the judgment, their not knowing of Christ in his members; but if they neglect and have not done this thing, though they may plead ever so strongly that they did not know any such, they will incur and must suffer the judgment. The Jews cried up Moses and the prophets, which had been before, and yet persecuted Christ and his apostles; and many now cry up the prophets, and Christ's appearance in a body of flesh, with his death, resurrection, ascension, etc., and also the apostles, both their words and practices; and yet persecute him, and the same practices, in his present servants and members. How will these possibly escape this judgment?

Objection. But they that did minister unto him, they knew not that it was he either, as ver. 37, 38, 39. Therefore they doing of it ignorantly (as we may say), it seems to lack its due weight, and not to render them so worthy of the reward, as if they had done it in a clear and distinct understanding.

Answer. They did not know it so as to put so great a value upon it as Christ here does; but they knew

that they had done things of this kind, and that they had done them on Christ's account. But that Christ was so in those to whom they did them, as he now speaks; and that he would set so high an esteem on it, that they were not aware of. Was it you yourself that were naked, sick, in prison, etc., and did take all this as done to you? This is wonderful to us, that you should so set by what we poor worms did to your suffering saints, in your name and fear.

Question. But why does Christ make this the ground of the general and universal judgment? Men have committed many other sins (some of which are in appearance far greater): why does Christ mention none of them, but fix the judgment only upon this?

Answer. Surely because this is more in his eye, and more hateful to him than them all. This argues an evil nature and spirit, and the joining of the mind to the wicked one, more than them all. For it plainly shows, that there is none of the love and nature of Christ in such persons; for if there be of the love and nature of Christ in any person, it will incline his heart towards those which are Christ's, and especially in their suffering conditions. He therefore that has no sense of those that belong to Christ, in their suffering conditions, shows plainly, that he has none of Christ's nature in him, and so is not at all found in that which Christ comes to save, but in that which he comes to judge and destroy forever.

Now I have three questions more to propose, which I desire that all men that read may judge of in that which gives the true sense and judgment of their weight.

1. If this be the cause and ground of the eternal judgment, whether it may not also be the ground of temporal judgments on persons and nations; that is, if there be such a thing to be found in them, as neglecting to minister to Christ in his suffering members?
2. If there be not only this to be found, but also a causing of him in his members thus to suffer (a causing of their hunger, thirst, nakedness, sickness, imprisonment, etc.), whether this is not of very great force to draw down plagues, judgments, and miseries upon a nation?
3. If there have been such sins committed, God's anger provoked, and his judgments drawn down, whether it be possible to stop them, or there can be any reasonable hope of the diverting of them, without a deep humbling before God, confessing the thing in the sight of the world (as it has been done in the sight of the world), and laying such a foundation for the future, as the Lord and men may be satisfied and assured that no such thing shall be done any more? Was it not a shameful thing, that Jerusalem, the outward holy city (and chief, if not only professing people of the world), should stone, cast out, persecute, put to death, etc. the prophets and Christ of God, and set up priests and prophets of their own? And where, and by whom, are the witnesses and martyrs hunted and slain? Is it not still in that which is called the *Christian world*? Do not they strive (each sort) for their forms, persecuting the life and power, and those which follow the Lamb therein, out of their forms, from which his life and spirit calls and gathers? Oh that the world were awakened! Oh that this nation were awakened! Have there not been judgments enough to awaken it? Oh, do not dally! you have God to deal with, who has brought his truth and people upon the stage; who is arisen against the darkness (which has long possessed the hearts of men, and held his people in captivity under their corrupt wills and wisdom), and to bind down sin and iniquity in men. Oh! do not say, "Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords from us;" but rather let every one be willing to be found by the pure light of God,

by that which is holy of God in him (from the king that sits upon the throne, even to the very beggar on the dunghill); that iniquity may be purged out of the hearts of men, and they become, not a vainly professing nation, but indeed a holy nation to the Lord; that peace and righteousness, love and mercy, yes, sweet and tender bowels may dwell within it, and flow up and down in all its borders; to the glory of God's truth, which is able to work this (were it but let in, received, and subjected to in the minds of men), and to the delight and joy of the hearts of all in the nation.

ISAAC PENINGTON.

Written in Aylesbury prison, the 29th of the Eighth month, 1666.

## **CONCERNING THE SUM OR SUBSTANCE OF OUR RELIGION**

### **WHO ARE CALLED QUAKERS**

#### **AND THE EXERCISES AND TRAVAILS OF OUR SPIRITS THEREIN**

**[no date]**

THIS is the sum or substance of our religion; namely, to feel and discern the two seeds: the seed of enmity, the seed of love; the seed of the flesh, the seed of the Spirit; the seed of Hagar, the seed of Sarah; the seed of the Egyptian womb, the holy seed of Israel; and to feel the judgments of God administered to the one of these, till it be brought into bondage and death; and the other raised up in the love and mercy of the Lord to live in us, and our souls gathered into it, to live to 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; that the soul, which came from God, might return back again to him, out of the sinful, wandering, miserable, lost estate, and might live and walk with him, in the purity, virtue, and power of his own life and spirit.

But then the other birth strives for its life, and Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, takes part with his Egyptians against Israel; and there is no help to the poor soul, but as God pours out his judgments upon that hard nature and spirit in man, which is of the birth of the flesh, and receives the influences and strength of its father, which 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 sense 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 does but provoke the enemy; and the soul being yet in his territories, and under his power, he deals the more hardly 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 many times

choose rather to lie still in Egypt, 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 wait upon him who has visited, in 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 eased, and its deliverance working out.

And so at last when the judgment is finished in the land of Egypt, the strength of Pharaoh and his Egyptians broken, their first-born slain, 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 on; yes, 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. Oh! who can read truly, that has not felt and been a living witness thereof?

But now, when the seed is come out of Egypt, there 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, who will strive by open force, and also with enchantments, to betray Israel; yes, there is a part yet unbrought down, yet unwrought out, at which they will be striving to enter the mind. And as Israel forgets his God, walking out of his counsel, hearkening to that which his ear should be shut against, and so joining to the contrary seed; the plagues, the judgments, the indignation, and woe will be felt by him, and many carcasses may fall there. So that there may be a great outcry in the heart, *Who can stand before this holy Lord God? Shall we be consuming with dying?* Yes, there is something must be consumed with dying. Yes, if a man came so far as to witness dominion and victory over his soul's enemies, the evil seed brought into death in him, and a possession and inheritance in the pure rest of life; yet if that part be not kept in the death, if there be not a praying and watching to the preserver of Israel (in the pure fear and humility), the enemy will be sowing to the flesh again; he will be getting some of his corrupt seeds into the heart again (if the soul do but sleep and become negligent), and so corruption will take root again, and the contrary birth grow up again, and the foxes break into the vineyard, and spoil the tender grapes.

So that 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 then to witness and experience daily the same power, keeping the one in death, and the other in life, by the holy ministration of God's pure living covenant. And so to know God in this covenant, (in this covenant which lives, gives life, and keeps in life) and to walk with God, and worship and serve him therein, even 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 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," says the apostle. Gal. 5:17.

Here are the two seeds (the seed of the serpent, the seed of the woman) whose striving and fight is in man, when God awakens the soul; the one whereof has a nature, a desire, or lust contrary to the other. Now as the 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. So that this is it every one is to wait for, after they once come to the sensible knowledge and experience of these two, to feel the flesh brought down, the lusts of it denied, the judgments of the Lord administered to it; that so the other may come up to live, thrive, and prevail in the soul, and so the soul witness 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, whereon his Son is set King to reign? whereon 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? as 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 Zion-ward; thus God redeems her converts. Yes, yes; it is truly felt and witnessed; the living righteousness of Christ revealed in the heart, and having power there, 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, and receives virtue and power from him, then he 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 can it be otherwise, when the righteous life is revealed and brought up into dominion in him? How can the same righteous Spirit and life (revealed in the members, as it was in the head) 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 exceeding comfortable and precious to them that are in the true travel towards it; much more to them that enjoy it.

This is the sum of all, even to know and experience what is to be brought down into death, and kept in death; what to be brought up out of the grave, to live to God, and reign in his dominion; and what to be kept in subjection and obedience to him who is to reign. Now to experience it thus done in the heart; the flesh brought down, the seed of life raised, and the soul subject to the pure heavenly power, whose right it is to reign in the heart in and by the seed; 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; and this son, this true Israelite, this redeemed one, may wear the white robe, and serve God in righteousness and holiness, without fear of his enemies, (keeping in and to the covenant, which ministers life and power abundantly) all the days of his life. For that was to be the outward state of the outward Israel; keeping to God in the outward covenant; and it is to be the inward

state of the inward Israel, keeping to God in the inward covenant, which is a pure covenant of life and peace, of all inward and spiritual blessings and mercies in Christ, wherewith the souls are blessed that are obedient unto God, and walk humbly with him in this covenant. And I beseech you to consider (O tender people! who are grieved because of sin and corruption in your hearts, and would eagerly witness victory and dominion over it, in the name and strength of the Lord Jesus Christ), whom did that prophecy of Zachariah (Luke 1:17,72,74,75) concern? What was that holy covenant? Who were to be so redeemed? Who were the Israel that were to inherit this promise? All the promises are yes and amen in Christ to the Israel of God. Why should not the Israel of God hope to enjoy this? Even so to be acquainted with God's Holy Spirit, and to wait upon him, that they may witness it granted to them; that they, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him (whose eyes are piercing, and can behold no iniquity) all the days of their lives. Surely they who witness that promise (mentioned Isa. 35:8) fulfilled to them, cannot fall short of this. And truly the children of the new covenant can never come thoroughly to live to God till they witness the inward circumcision of the heart, so as to love the Lord with all the heart and soul. Deut. 30:6. Now where it is so, the devil or lust can find no place of entrance; and how then shall they be able to sow their seed, and bring forth sin? Out of the evil heart proceeds all evil; but out of that heart which is thoroughly circumcised, to love the Lord God wholly, evil cannot proceed. If lust be not conceived, it cannot bring forth sin; and where the womb which conceived it is kept dry and barren, it cannot conceive again. And is not this the promise of the gospel, that the womb which was once barren, shall be very fruitful, and bear abundantly; but the other grow feeble, and be able to bear no more? Oh! that people had experience of God's power, and did believe therein! What should stand in the way of it? It was Israel's sin of old, when they looked at their enemies, and saw their footing and strength in the land which God had promised to Abraham's seed for an inheritance, they could not believe that they could be overcome. Oh! take heed of the same unbelief now.

## **CONCERNING CHRIST**

### **COMING TO THE FATHER BY HIM, RECEIVING HIM, WALKING IN HIM, NOT IN THE OLDNESS OF THE LETTER, BUT IN THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT; AND CONCERNING READING THE SCRIPTURES ARIGHT**

**"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by me," says Christ. John 14:6.**

MAN, in the corrupt, degenerate estate, is fallen from God, and has lost his image (the holy, heavenly image of the Father of Spirits); is driven out from his presence, 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 work; even to return to the Father; to come back out of the prodigal lost state, to the Father's house; where there is sufficiency and fullness of true bread and water of life to satisfy every hungry and thirsty soul.

The way whereby a man must come, the truth wherein he must be renewed, the life wherein a man

must be quickened, is Christ, the Son of the living God; and he must know him as the Son of the living God, and feel him revealed in him, and received by him, and so walk in him the way, in him the truth, in him the life, if ever he come to the Father. He must not rest in the description of things; but feel and know, receive and walk in the *thing*, which by the Spirit of the Lord has been often formerly, and is still, described, in what words, and by what means, the Spirit pleases. But to receive all the descriptions of him that were formerly given forth, or all the descriptions that are now given forth, that will not do; but the soul that will live by him, must receive him, and feel the ingrafting into him the holy root, the living word of God's eternal power, and must feel this word ingrafted into his heart, so that there be a real becoming one in nature and spirit with him. And then he is truly in the vine, in the olive-tree, and partakes of the virtue and sap thereof; he abiding therein, and walking in the spirit, life, and power thereof.

Now here a man walks not, nor cannot walk, in the oldness of the letter; but in the newness of the Spirit only. Paul, notwithstanding 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 got the form of godliness, but turned from and denied the power, they walked but in the oldness of the letter. Yes, 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 far are many, who pretend to Christ in this day, from this state! who never came so far as to walk in the oldness of the letter, from a true understanding thereof; but have only learned and continued to walk in the oldness of their own apprehensions and conceivings upon the letter.

Can these, in this state, possibly understand truth, or know the inward, spiritual, precious appearances thereof, either in their own hearts, or others? Surely no. Why so? Why this is the reason: because they measure the appearances of truth, either in themselves or others, by their own old apprehensions and conceivings upon scriptures concerning truth; which are not the proper measure of it. Now all such are yet in darkness, let them pretend what they will, and grow ever so high in knowledge, exercises, and experiences after this manner; and so the best, zealous, and most knowing of them in this state, are but blind leaders of the blind, and, thus going on, shall most certainly fall into the ditch of perdition. Oh that men could feel that which makes rightly sensible, and might lay it to heart! For no man can confess Christ (how then can he receive him, and walk in him?) but by the Holy Spirit.

And he that knows not the Spirit rightly, knows not Christ rightly; and he that does not know him rightly, does not confess him rightly; and none can know him rightly but by the revelation of the Father inwardly. 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 though the heart of man, in the unregenerate estate, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and no man of himself can search or know it; yet this is not the estate of the true Israelites whom God has cleansed, and taught to deny themselves daily; but they have boldness before that God who has searched them, and removed from them the iniquities which he found therein. Yes, whoever witnesses Christ revealed within, shall find him revealed within for this very end, to destroy the works of the devil there; and 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, mind this; It is said of the Jews, that when they read Moses (or in reading 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. Do you witness the promise fulfilled to you? Do you know the difference between reading the Scriptures with the veil on you, 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 of itself, in searching into the Scriptures? If the wrong birth, the wrong wisdom, the wrong understanding, be at work, it can gather but that which will feed and strengthen itself; and if you be not in Christ, and do not read in Christ, the veil is not taken away from you, for the veil is only done away in him; but you read and walk in the oldness of your apprehensions upon the letter, and not in the newness of the Spirit: and so know neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God, whatever you profess to men, or dream concerning yourself. For it is no other indeed; your knowledge, your apprehensions, your faith, your hope, your peace, your joy (being out of the compass of the pure, living truth, in which the substance, the virtue, the kernel of all is comprised and comprehended forever) are but as so many dreams.

Oh that men that are any whit tender, and have any sincere desires in them towards the Lord, could read that one scripture (Psa. 43:3,40 sensibly and experimentally! "Oh send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto your holy hill, and to your tabernacles." (What! did not David know how to go to the hill and tabernacles of God, without a particular sending forth of light and truth from God to lead him there?) Then may men go to the altar of God, unto God their exceeding joy, and witness his hill and house their dwelling-place, when God, by his light and truth, sent forth from him into them, leads them there.

The Scriptures are words, whose chief end, drift, and service is, to bring men to the Word from which the Scriptures came. And when men are there, then they are in the life of the Scriptures, and witness the fulfilling of the Scriptures, even the executing the righteous judgments of God upon that spirit, mind, and nature in them, which is contrary to his image; and the fulfilling of the promises and sure mercies, which belong to Christ the seed, and to them who are gathered into, and abide in, Christ the seed. Here is the covenant, the new covenant. That which is said, or those things which are said, concerning the covenant in the Scriptures, are but descriptions of the 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 (so that the Lord is served in the dominion and power of his own life, in the righteousness and holiness before him, out of the fear of sin and death, all the days of our lives; so that captivity can lead captive, nor break the soul's peace no more; no, not so much as make afraid those that keep their habitation on God's holy mountain); here is the covenant indeed, the strength and virtue whereof is witnessed in the soul, as the soul feels the power of life revealed in it, and is made subject by 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; which never were sung, nor can be sung, in any part of Babylon; but all those songs are but dreams of the night, which will be

turned into howling and bitter lamentation, when the whore (that which has whored from God, and is not in the wisdom of his Spirit, whatever she may pretend) is stripped, and the nakedness of her profession and religion (with all her duties and ordinances, as she calls them) made manifest.

### **CONCERNING THE GOSPEL MINISTRATION**

IF the gospel be not a ministration of words or letter, but of Spirit, life, and power; and if it was the intent of God that men should not stick in words or testimonies concerning the thing, but come to the thing itself, and live in the Son's life and power, and feel the Son living in them, then they are greatly mistaken, who think to gather a rule to themselves out of the testimonies and declarations of things in the Scriptures, and do not wait upon the Lord to receive his Spirit itself to become their rule, guide, and way. For these are all one; the truth is the way; the truth which lives and abides in the heart (where it is received and entertained) is the way; the rule is the guide: for God is *One*. There are many names, but the thing is *One*. The life, the power, the wisdom in the Father, Son, and Spirit, *is all One*: yes, they themselves are *One*, perfectly *One*, not at all divided or separated; but where the Father is, the Son is; and where the Son is, the Spirit is; and where the Spirit is, there is both the Father and the Son, who tabernacle in man in the day of the gospel. And where these are, *there* that is which is to be preferred before all words, which was afore them, and is in nature, Spirit, and glory above them. He that has the Son, has life, even the life eternal, which the words testify of. He that has the Son has him which is true; and he that is in the Son is in him that is true; and abiding there, cannot be deceived; but he that is not there is deceived, let him apprehend and gather out of the Scriptures what he can. Oh, how is God glorified, and how is the redemption and real salvation of the soul witnessed in this despised dispensation of truth, which God has held forth in these latter days! Blessed be the name of the Lord, who has hid this pure dispensation of life from the eye of the prudent worldly-wise part in every man, revealing it only to the babish simplicity which is of his Son, and which lives in him, and by him.

### **CONCERNING CHRIST'S BEING MANIFESTED WITHOUT, AND HIS BEING ALSO MANIFESTED WITHIN, AND HOW BOTH ARE OWNED BY THEM THAT KNOW THE TRUTH.**

It is objected against us, who are called QUAKERS, that we deny Christ (and look not to be saved by him) as he was manifested without us, but look only to be saved by a Christ in us. To which this is in my heart to answer such as singly desire satisfaction therein.

We do indeed expect to be saved (yes, and not only so, but do already, in our several measures, witness salvation) by the revelation and operation of the life of Christ within us; yet not without relation to what he did without us. 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 that, since the days of the apostles, have been very much held in the unrighteousness, and in the separation from the inward work of the power and life of Christ in the heart; which, as so held, cannot save any. But whoever feels the light and life of Christ revealed in him, and comes into union with God there-through, he feels the work of regeneration, of sanctification, of justification, of life, and redemption; and so comes to reap benefit inwardly, and to partake of the blessed fruits of all that Christ did outwardly. Yes, he that is thus one with Christ in the Spirit, cannot exclude himself, nor is excluded by

God, from the advantage of any thing, nor every thing, Christ did in that 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 laying hold on it to save it, but to witness the working out and the effecting of the salvation, as really in the substance, as Israel of old did in the 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 to what from God they required. So to the inward Israel Christ is given for a leader and commander, who appears to the distressed embondaged soul in Egypt, brings out of Egypt, and so leads on towards the good land, and into it. Now as the soul follows, as the soul believes in his appearances, and obeys his voice in the holy, pure covenant of life; so he works out the redemption thereof. But as unbelief and disobedience get up, and the heart is hardened at any time against his voice and counsel, and the ear open 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 requisite is to abide in the sense of the Redeemer's power, as also in waiting for his motions and appearances, and in the faith and obedience thereof. For sin gathers strength, and is brought forth, by letting in and giving way to the motions thereof: and so also holiness and righteousness is brought forth and gets ground in the mind, 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; and that the heart may be kept with all diligence, because out of it are the issues both of life and death. And most happy is he who knows the issues of death stopped, and the issues of life opened, and whose spirit is naked and open before the Lord, for life to spring up in him, and issue forth through him at its 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 deliverance witnessed inwardly, by those that wait upon the Lord, and are faithful to the leadings of his Holy Spirit, as ever there was by the Jews outwardly, in their faithful following 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. That, with the other miracles which he wrought then, was but a shadow of what he would work and perform inwardly in the day of his Spirit and holy power: and shall he, or can he (to those that faithfully wait upon him) fall short in the one, of what he shadowed out in the other? No, surely; it was the intent of his heart, and he will not fail to perform it, to save to the very utmost all that come to God by him, and abide in his holy, pure, righteous, living covenant. Here is the skill of Christianity, to abide in him; and here the living virtue and pure power is felt, which overcomes all, but nothing can overcome it: but victory, dominion, glory, majesty, and power is sung unto him, who is King of saints, who reigns in righteousness, and who establishes peace and truth within his borders.

#### **A FEW WORDS CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLE OF TRUTH; WHAT IT IS, HOW IT MAY BE DISCERNED, AND HOW IT MAY BE PURCHASED AND POSSESSED**

Question 1. WHAT is the principle of truth?

Answer. It is the light, which reprove and makes sin manifest. "Whatsoever does make manifest is

light." Wherefore he says, "Awake you that sleep, arise from the dead," etc. Eph. 5:13,14. There is no other way of awaking out of sleep, and arising from the dead, but by the light which makes sin manifest. And oh, how precious is that light!

Question 2. How may the principle of truth be discerned?

Answer. By its piercing, quickening nature, which discovers itself in its appearances and operations. For it appears and works, not like man's reason, or like motions of his mind which he takes into his understanding part; but it appears and works livingly, powerfully, and effectually in the heart.

Man's reason is corrupt, dark, impure, since the fall; and in the hand and under the power of the wicked one. Its nature is to hide and cover sin, not to discover it. Now the light of the law, which discovers sin, arises not hence. 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 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 discovers sin, is all holy and pure, like the fountain from which it comes. Now a man that is acquainted both with reason and with this light, he can distinguish the nature and operations of both. For there is a great difference between truth held in the reasoning part, and truth held in its own principle. It is very powerful in the one; it effects little in the other. In the pure quickenings of life this distinction is perceived, and also held. Therefore our advice is to all men, to retire from all mortality, that they may come to feel the spring of life in themselves, and something springing therefrom into them to quicken them, and to wait to have their understandings opened and kept open by that; that so they may receive, retain, and not again lose the capacity of understanding the things of God's kingdom.

Question 3. How may this principle, 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 crosses 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 stand in the parting with and loss of 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 thus come to give up to and follow the light of the Son.

"The law of the Lord is perfect; converting (or restoring) the soul." Psa. 19:7. What law was this or what law is this? Was it the law of works in the hand of Moses? Or is it the law of faith in the hand of Christ? Does not Christ enlighten every man that comes into the world? Would not God have all men to be saved? And does he not give to all a proportion of the true light whereby they may be saved? And is it not the property of this light to convert to God? Can any man receive this, and be united to this, and it not change his nature? So that he must needs have a new nature, and from that new nature do that naturally, which the Jews, by all their endeavors without this, could never do.

Can any thing convert fallen man to God, but Christ? Has any thing power to convert to God, but his pure law of life? Can Christ and his light be separated? Can any man receive his light and be united

thereto, and not receive him? Oh that men's hearts and understandings were opened by the Spirit and power of the Lord! For this is a direct riddle to all men, who have not God's heifer to plow with, to understand it by. And so for lack of a true understanding, it is despised and rejected among the builders; but with us it is elect and precious, chosen of God, and precious in the eye of our souls.

Now this does not exclude or make void any thing that Christ did in his body of flesh here on earth, or that he does in heaven for his; but this brings unto a right, and into a possession and enjoyment of his purchase. For all that are in the darkness, and walk in the darkness, have nothing to do with Christ in truth and reality, whatever they may profess, and what hopes so ever they may feed themselves with; but all that are in any measure of his light, and walk therein, they are so far of him, and have a right to, and share in, all that he did in and from the same light and Spirit.

And this I dare positively hold forth as a standing truth, which has been sealed unto me by constant experience; That no man can fall in with and obey the light wherewith he is enlightened, but he must deny himself, and take up a cross to his own wisdom and will; which 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; yes, then 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 cannot but call 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 for evermore; and beside him there is no such Savior. Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord forever, the days of mourning after salvation are over with many, and the days of reaping and enjoying salvation are come, which shall endure with the Israel of God for evermore, amen.

ISAAC PENINGTON

## LETTERS OF ISAAC PENINGTON

### 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. O that that eye and heart may be kept open in you, which knows the value of these things! and that you may be kept close to the feeling of the life, that you may be fresh in your spirit in the midst of your sufferings, and may reap the benefit

of them: finding that pared off thereby, which hinders the bubblings of the everlasting springs, and makes unfit for the breaking forth and enjoyment of the pure power! This is the brief salutation of my dear love to you, which desires your strength and settlement in the power; 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.

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 KING CHARLES II

O KING,

The Lord God of heaven and earth is mighty, who has often and greatly shaken this nation already: and this I have observed, that the seeming settlements, which hitherto have been, since the Lord began to shake, have been but preparative to a further shaking and dissettling. O! happy wert you, if you could wait for, and receive, such a guidance from God, as that your government might be so pure, peaceable, and righteous, as it might need no further shaking by his hand. God sometimes raises man from a low estate, and exalts him; but if he forget the Lord, and his heart be lifted up, He is able to bring him down again. O! fear the Lord in the days of your prosperity, and let your heart be abased before Him, and sensible of the need of his preservation. Indeed, it is a hard matter to govern these kingdoms aright, as the state now stands. You may easily err and dash upon the rocks. O that the pure eye were open in you: whereby you might see that as you did not gain these kingdoms by policy or strength; so neither can you retain them by those means, but only by the good pleasure of Him who has all the earth at his dispose! I beseech you, in that tender love I bear to you, take heed of going about to plant what the Lord has plucked up; or of endeavoring to pluck up what the Lord has planted. If you look with man's eye, you can not see what God is doing in the world; and so may easily run a course contrary to his will, and eternal counsel: and O how hazardous must this needs be to you! The eternal peace of your soul with God forever, and your prosperity, depend upon your knowing the counsel of the Lord, and upon your obedience thereunto. Oh! retire from this world's baits, snares, temptations, allurements, and vanities; which draw out and defile the mind; and retreat inward, that the Lord may teach you his fear, and preserve you from those lusts and desires of the fleshly mind, which, being hearkened to and followed, are very dangerous to the soul, and may prove perilous outwardly also. What shall my love say to you? O that the Lord would speak to you in spirit, and give you an ear to hear, that you might be happy now and forever! Often have my bowels rolled over you exceedingly, even in the day of your adversity, and since your prosperity. O that you could remember God daily, and forget this world! Remember the years of your affliction; and make use of the present day with a humble heart, and with a broken spirit. O! do nothing to provoke the Lord against you; for surely his eye is upon you, and his heart ponders all your ways. And bow before him for his counsel, that you may not arise against your Maker, as the foregoing powers have done: for if He rise up in battle against you, you will no more be able to stand before Him than they were. No, the stronger you are outwardly settled, the greater will the glory of his name be in overturning you. O that you might rule under God,

and for God! and not with that wisdom, and with those self-ends, and interests, which are not of Him, and cannot but be against Him. I cannot but desire your good; yes, the very breathings of my heart to the Lord have been often for you: and upon that account singly do I write thus to you; beseeching the Lord, if it be his pleasure, that when that work which is necessary to be done is finished, your eyes may be opened to see the way of righteous government in the true light.

From one who mourns over the misery of mankind, longing for the redemption of those that go astray, and a true lover of your soul.

I. P.

Aylesbury prison, where I am visiting some of my dear

Friends in God's eternal truth, 17th 7th mo. 1661

### POSTSCRIPT

Let your government be like unto God's: even a yoke to the unjust, but liberty to the just. O, when shall the cry of the innocent cease, throughout all your borders? Restore unto the Lord his dominion over men's consciences, while it is in the power of your hand to do it – O! seek after love, meekness, righteousness, tenderness, towards all your subjects: which has God's blessing with it, and is the way to win all their hearts towards you. And do not harden multitudes of them against you, by unnecessary yokes over their consciences: which they that do not eye God in all, and in lowliness of spirit bow before Him, may be apt to kick against and strive to throw off. — And I beseech you, take heed of this world's pleasures and vanities; which steal away the heart from God, and make it thick and gross, that it cannot hear his voice or know his counsel. I am satisfied with what the Lord shall do; but it is the earnest desire of my heart, that you might be spared in the day of God's visitation, which is coming upon this nation. — This is my desire for you, that your heart might be brought into, and kept in, that frame which God loves and delights to be present with, and to instruct, and [that] all such things might be eschewed and avoided by you, which may prove dangerous to your soul forever, and to your government here. For though you be a great king here, yet, if you will obtain the blessing and inheritance of eternal life, and escape eternal misery and destruction, you must take up the cross to your lusts, and walk in the same path of mortification and self-denial, which God, who is no respecter of persons, has chalked out to the meanest of your subjects. Hear, O king, turn towards the Lord, bow before Him in soul and spirit, in all things. It is a greater honor to be a subject to Him, than to reign over men.

TO \_\_\_\_\_

DEAR FRIEND,

It pleased the Lord to refresh me by your letter. O how precious and pleasant is it to feel life stirring in God's tender lambs, and their hearts purely breathing towards their Father! O that their joy may be full; and that they might sit safe under the shadow of their beloved, bringing forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness to him, in the pure stillness and rest, forever. Shall not the clouds fly away? Shall

not the blackness of darkness and troubles fix and abide in its own center; and all sorrow, sighing, and fear of the soul's enemy, vanish from the hearts of all the mourners after, and waiters for, the Lord.

O God, hear the cries of your poor inwardly distressed, and also outwardly afflicted and persecuted, heritage. Arise against that which stands in the way of their life and peace, and of your service and glory through them; and let your powerful presence (which does great things) be felt in the hearts and assemblings of your people together; that they may be purified and preserved thereby to dwell in your courts, to be satisfied with you, to rejoice in your goodness, and be far from the fear of evil and transgression; which you know how sorely it has afflicted them, and bowed down their souls before you.

O my Father, shall your lambs live? Will you be with them, a tender Father and a mighty God and Savior? Will you encourage them concerning all their fears, and carry on your work of redemption mightily in their hearts? Then shall the glory of your name be sung, and our God alone exalted in the midst of us forever. And we will walk in humility and fear before you, and in tender bowels one towards another all our days; and nothing but life shall reign in us, and appear amongst us, when you have perfectly destroyed sin and death out of the midst of us.

Dear friend, my heart is with you in your assemblings; and sometimes the Lord gives me cries for you, that he would appear amongst you, as a refresher of your souls and guider of your paths. And O that he would put forth his mighty hand to slay the enmity and earthly nature (with all the reasonings thereof) in every heart; that the pure seed might spring and prosper in you all, to the praise of that fountain from whose fulness it is, and by whose blessing alone it grows up and prospers.

I am your friend in dearness and truth of affection,

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 4th of 1st month, 1665

## TO A 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; yet the spirit of your letter does so strongly draw, 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 principle of life in the heart, from which all good springs. This you are to mind in yourself; and this, you are to wait on the Lord, to be taught and enabled by him to reach to, in your children; that you may be an instrument in his hand, to bring them into that fear of him, which is acceptable to him, and will be profitable to them. Mind, therefore, 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 sees 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 be put forth in sensibility or in vanity; and which can give you an advantage of stirring 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. And take heed of a judgment after the flesh; for so you may judge us, our principles and practices, and approve or disapprove, etc. But wait to feel that raised in you, which judges righteous judgment in every particular; and wait the time of its judgment, and be still and silent, further than manifestly you know that it, and not you, judges.

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, give forth in fear, and wait for his carrying it home and working 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; so as *he* may be known to be all daily, and *they* able to be nothing without him.

You expect, perhaps, from me, an outward rule; but I have no rule, but the inward life, and that not in the way of outward knowledge, but daily made known as my Father pleases; nor can I direct you to any other, but 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, O wait, for the true discerning which is given to the true seed (in the raising and dominion of which in you you will feel it, and not otherwise), that a wrong thing judge not in you, in the reasoning and fairly appearing wisdom; for then you will judge and be led amiss, and, through error of judgment, stray aside, and wander from the desire of your heart.

But breathe unto the Lord, that your heart may be single, your judgment set straight, you yourself by his principle of life in you, and your children guided to, and brought up in, the sense of the same principle. As for praying, they will not need to be taught that outwardly; but, if a true sense be kindled in them, though ever so young, from that sense will arise breathings to him that begat it, suitable to their state; which 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; who am your unfeigned Friend, though outwardly unknown,

I. P.

20th of Third Month, 1665

### TO BRIDGET ATLEY

DEAR FRIEND,

I know your soul desires to live; and my soul desires that you might live. Oh! why are you so backward to hearken to the voice which is nigh you, wherein is life? why do you reason? why do you consult? why do you expect? why do you hope? why do you believe against your own soul?

The snares of the subtle one will entangle forever, unless you wait for, hearken to, and obey the voice of the living God, who leads the single-hearted and obedient out of them. Is there any way of life but one? Is not the Lord leading his children in that way? Must not all that come after, follow in the footsteps of those that go before? Is there any Savior, but the seed of life and the Father of it? Is it not the same in you as in others? Has it not the same voice? Oh that you had the same ear and the same heart, that you might hear, receive, and live! They wait aright; do you wait so? They hope aright; do you hope so? If not, what will your waiting and expecting come to? In *that*, which has sometimes inclined your heart, *there* is truth, *there* were the beginnings of salvation; but in *that* which draws you out to expect some great matters, and dries up your present sense, and hinders your present subjection, *therein* is deceit, and the destruction of your soul. Therefore, if you desire and love the salvation thereof, Oh hasten, hasten out of it! wait for the reproofs of wisdom; and what it manifests to be of the earthly and worldly nature in you (the words, ways, thoughts, customs thereof), hasten out of. Oh, turn your back upon the world with speed, and turn your face towards the heavenly wisdom and light eternal! which will be springing up in you, if you turn your back upon the world, and wait for it.

And do not look for such great matters to begin with, but be content to be a child, and let the Father proportion out daily to you what light, what power, what exercises, what straits, what fears, what troubles he sees fit for you; and do you bow before him continually, in humility of heart, who has the disposal of you, whether to life or death forever. Ah! that wisdom which would be choosing must be confounded, and the low, humble thing raised, which submits and cries to the Father in every condition. And in waiting to feel this, and in joining to this, you may meet with life; but death, destruction, and separation from God is the portion of the other forever! Oh, that you may be separated from it, and joined to the seed and birth of God; that, in it, your soul may spring up to know, serve, and worship the Lord, and to wait daily to be formed by him, until you become perfectly like him. But you must join in with the beginnings of life, and be exercised with the day of small things, before you meet with the great things, wherein is the clearness and satisfaction of the soul. The rest is at noon-day; but the travels begin at the breakings of day, wherein are but glimmerings, or little light, wherein the discovery of good and evil is not so manifest and certain; yet there must the traveler begin and travel; and in his faithful travels (in much fear and trembling, lest he should err), the light will break in upon him more and more.

This have I written in tenderness to you, that you might not miss of the path of the living, which is appointed of the Father to lead, and alone can lead, the soul to life. Oh! that you might be enlightened and quickened by the Lord to walk therein, and might be thankful for, and content with, what he gives you, and walk therein, from the evil to the good, from the earthly to the heavenly nature daily, and might not despise the cross or the shame of the seed. For I know there is a wisdom in you, which will despise and turn from it, until the Lord batter and crucify it; and I can hardly put up a more proper request for you, than that the Lord would draw out his sword against it, and deeply perplex and confound it in you.

I. P.

## TO ONE WHO SENT 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, what 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, I believe, in love; and, in love, am I 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 principle 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 sensibility or repentance, or join in covenant with God through Christ, until they know and receive something from God, wherein it may be done? O my dear friend! that he, and you, and all who in any measure turn from this world, and do indeed desire life eternal, might know the instruction of life, and feel that from God wherein he is known, loved, and joined with in covenant; that so, there might be a pure beginning, a pure growth and going on unto perfection, and not notions concerning things set up in the earthly understanding, which easily putrefy and defile; but pure life, felt and enjoyed in the heart, which is undefiled, and never saw nor shall see corruption. I have not freedom to write many words; but my love breathes for you, and my life desires fellowship with you, (if it may seem good unto my God,) in that which is pure of him, and will remain so forever.

And whatever men may say or think of me, I have no other religion now, than I had from the beginning; only a clearer leading into and guidance by that principle of life, in and through which, it pleased the Lord then to quicken me. And this is it, which I have daily experience of in my heart; that it 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, none but Christ, by his life revealed in the soul, and blood shed there to wash it, can save the poor sinner from sin, wrath, and misery; and 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 remain, 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 A FRIEND IN LONDON; SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN ON OCCASION OF THE PLAGUE

AH! FRIEND,

Dreadful is the Lord: 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 desire strength from him, to trust yourself and your family with him? Oh that you may be helped daily to cry unto him, that he may have mercy upon you, who is tender-hearted and able to preserve, when his arrows fly round about!

Retire, deeply retire, and wait to feel his life; that your soul may be gathered out of the reasonings and thoughts of your mind, into that which stays from them, and fixes beneath them; where 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, 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 bring your children and family into the same sense; that you and they together may enjoy the same preservation from him, so far as he sees fit, whose will is not to be limited, but to be subjected to.

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, nor altogether without dread to you, will prove of great advantage in 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 stand you in stead.

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; yes, indeed, I was quite overcome, and was made several times to break off, the freshness and strength of life in them 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!

Thus prays for you your unfeigned Friend, and dear lover of the pure seed of life in you,

I. P.

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.

Aylesbury Jail, 19th of Eighth Month, 1665

### 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 which time, his church has been as a desolate widow, mourning in the wilderness. Yet, during this season, God has not left his people; but there have been breathings and stirrings of life in and from the precious seed; in which breathings of life, they have seen something of the beauty of the built state, and have had true desires and longings after it: but, in the midst of these desires, the enemy has struck in upon their spirits, and put them upon pressing more forward towards it, than they have been truly led. So reading in the Scriptures of a church state and church orders, etc., they thought it was their duty to set on building; and so have thrust themselves into these things, in which they have not been accepted of the Lord; though, in their breathings and true desires, they were accepted. And what has been the issue of these buildings? Ah! the pure seed has been buried in them, they have been as a grave to it; and their own imaginations, and wrought-out knowledge, and way of worship, have been of high esteem.

O 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 must be scattered, all the gatherings, all the buildings, which are not of the Lord, that his gathering, his building, may be known and exalted in the earth: so that I would not have you hold up any thing 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 low of esteem it be in the eye of man; but man shall not be able to maintain his buildings, however high and strong in his own eye. Yes, every high tower and every fenced city shall fall before the dread of His presence, who has now appeared among his poor, desolate people, and gathered them within the verge of his power: blessed be his holy name forever!

And since my spirit is at this time thus unexpectedly opened, in love and in life, towards you, I shall mention one or two great snares, which I see professors entangled in, 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. And take heed to your steps, thoughts, and ways; for the Lord, who has long tenderly visited, is now laying stumbling-blocks; and not only the world, but even professors also, shall be hardened, snared, fall, and be taken; and this word shall be fulfilled, even among them, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." But woe unto him that has

stumbled at the living appearance of God's precious truth in this our day, and in his 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, feeling sense! Oh that that which has mourned and is oppressed among you might live, and rise up in the power of life, over that which has grieved and oppresses it! for, of a truth, I feel among you a wisdom and knowledge, which is not of the seed, but 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, desire, that the abominable thing among you might be discovered and purged out, and 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, there is no right asking of the Father. They think that praying in the name of Christ consists in using some outward words; as, "Do this for your Son's sake," or "We beg of you in Christ's name;" whereas, that in the heart which knows not the Father may use such words; and that which is taught of the Father to pray, and prays in the Son, may not be led to use those 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, *he prays in the name*, and his voice is owned of the Father; and not the other, who has learned in his own will, time, and spirit to use those words relative to the Son.

Another thing, wherein professors exceedingly err and mistake, is, about the applying of Christ's righteousness, which is only rightly done in the Spirit, where the application has its true virtue. But man's misapplication has no virtue; for, notwithstanding that, his sins remain; and so the comfort, hope, and joy in his heart, that his sins are pardoned is only a pleasing dream, which will deceive him when he awakes, and finds his sins not blotted out by God, but only in his own apprehension.

Ah Friends, that you might travel into truth, and meet with the unerring substance of things, that you might live, and not die! and then you will see how man has erred, and errs, yes, even the man in you; and 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 a perfect preservation out of them. There, it is my desire to meet and embrace you, in the dear bowels of love, where we may unite, and know one another, in the spiritual birth and life, inseparably, forever; if we daily mourn after, and faithfully wait upon, the true guide and leader thereunto.

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 A FRIEND (an extract)

The Lord is tender of me, and merciful to me. Though, indeed, I have felt much weakness both

inwardly and outwardly, yet my strength does not forsake me; but the mercies of the Lord are renewed to me, 'morning by morning.' I could almost sing to his glorious name, seeing (in the pure, powerful, overcoming life) the death of all that troubles Israel. O the gates of hell, you shall not prevail against the least lamb of my Father's preserving, glory be to his mercy, to his love, to his power, to his wisdom, to his goodness, for evermore!

[From Aylesbury Jail, according to Bevan, who dates it about 3rd month, 1666]

## **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 feel the breath of life, that life which at first quickened you, and which still quickens, being felt; and that breath of life has power over death; and being felt by you, 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.

O Father, blow upon flesh in us all, dry it up at the roots, let all the births thereof die in us, and its womb become barren; that no more fruit may be brought unto death and unrighteousness; but let your pure principle live in us, and the womb, that has been too long barren, abound with seed unto you; that we may be, to your praise, a vineyard of your own planting, watering, and dressing, bringing forth pure holy fruits, pleasant to your taste; that you may never repent of the especial love, favor, and mercy you have shown to us, in gathering us out of the world, and from amidst the many professions; but may follow us with the same love and delight, to do us good forever; and we may be found walking worthy of your tender visits, and the great mercy you has shown us, and of the great things we yet hope for from you.

My Friends, what shall I say unto you? Oh! the Lord keep you living and sensible, and let your walking and converse be with him, both in private and in your assemblings; 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 in 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 bowels of love and tender care of you in the quickening life of God; and 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 of him; that you may at last find your hearts fitted for, and welcomed into, the bosom of your Beloved, and there may sit down in the rest and joy of his fulness for evermore; which is the blessed end of the Lord's love to you, and all the faithful travails which have been for you.

Your Friend and brother in the Truth.

I. P.

From my place of confinement in Aylesbury

20th of Fourth Month, 1666

Even when you were sitting together, waiting on the Lord (some of you, I doubt not), 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.

**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 issuings-forth of his loving-kindness and mercies? Oh his pity, his compassion! (must I forever say) that my soul yet lives, and has hope before him! And can not you also say the same? Oh, my friend! we feel mercy and salvation from the Lord. Oh, that he might have pure praise and service from his own in us! and yet, that will be little thanks to us, but rather a new mercy received from him. But all is his own, and of his own do we give him; and that, only when he quickens, helps, and enables us to give. 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; that you may know that death passing upon you, and perfected in you, which prepares for, and lets into, the fulness of his pure, 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 BRIDGEWATER

FRIEND,

It is the desire of my heart to walk with God, in the true fear of his name, and in true love and goodwill 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 any thing 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 therefor. If this be a right course, I am not to be condemned herein; 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 thereunto. That which you have done to me, has not made me your enemy; but in the midst of the sense of it, I desire your welfare, and that you may so carry yourself in your place, and actions, as that you may neither provoke 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 therein, wherein the Lord has not given me liberty? 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 from him. You have but a time to be in the world, and then eternity begins: and 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 is only able to lead man aright. Indeed, you should be subject in your own heart, to that which you are offended at in others, even that in the inner parts, which testifies for God and against the thoughts, ways, and works of corrupt man; that you might feel a principle of life from God, and good fruit brought forth from that principle to him; and that the evil nature, with the evil works thereof, might be cut down in you; that your soul may escape the wrath and misery, which attend the works and workers of iniquity.

I have sent you this enclosed, 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 in true love was it writ, and is of a healing and guiding nature. I have formerly writ 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, whereunto I have given you no provocation, neither for the beginning nor continuance of them; and if you can bring that thing to the trial of the witness of God in your heart, that will deal truly with you, blaming what God blames, and justifying what he justifies. And though the Lord beholds, and will plead the cause of his innocent ones (who, the more helpless they are, the more they are considered and tendered by him), yet I do not desire that you should suffer, either from God or man, on my account; but 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, in the troublous and stormy hour; in which, the Lord will distress man, and make him feel his sin and misery.

This is the sum of what I have at present to say, who have written this, not for any by-end, but in the stirrings of true love towards you; and from a true desire, that you might feel the power of God forming in your heart aright, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in you; that you might be made by him of the seed of the blessed, and inherit the blessing, and find the earthly nature consumed, and brought to nought in you; to which is the curse, and which 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, and the terribleness of his wrath and consuming pleasure in that day, I warn you in tenderness, and in the bowels of love beseech you, to consider your ways, and make your peace with him; that you may not be irrecoverably and eternally miserable; but may be transformed by his life and nature, and sow to him the fruits thereof, that you may reap, and receive of him that which is the soul's joy.

And, friend, know this assured truth; it is not a religion of man's making or choosing (neither the Pope's, nor any other man's), but only that which is of God, which is acceptable to him: and what will become of that man, whose very religion and worship are hateful 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 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; because 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 \_\_\_\_\_

FRIEND,

Your advantage in your travels is great over what it has been; the Lord having given you a better sight both of your enemies, and of that wherein his strength against them is revealed.

Now what remains but that you hope in him, and breathe unto him, and hang upon him; that his virtue may flow into you, and the mountains and difficulties may pass away, before the presence of the Seed, who is revealed in you? Look down no more, look out no more; but dwell with your beloved, in the tent that he has pitched for you. Let him do what he will, let him appear how he will, wait on him in the daily exercise; stand still in the faith, and see him working out your salvation, and scattering the bones of them that have besieged you. Think not hardly of him by no means; question not his carrying on of his work. He knows what yet he has to do, and what stratagem the enemy yet has to surprise and entangle you. Oh feel his arm stretched out for you! and be not so much discouraged, in the sight of what is yet to be done, as comforted in his good-will towards you. 'Tis true, he has chastened you with rods and sore afflictions; but did he ever take away his loving kindness from you? or did his

faithfulness ever fail in the sorest, blackest, thickest, darkest, night that ever befell you? And breathe to him, for the carrying on of his work; that you may feel his presence and life, getting dominion over death daily in you, more and more. And wait to feel strength of life, that your growth may be pure, and the holy seed may have dominion and be all in you.

I. P.

8th of the Eighth Month, 1666

### POSTSCRIPT

The enemy will be laying snares, and forging subtle devices to darken and bow you down, which (you, not being hasty to believe, join with, and let in as true, but waiting on the Lord in singleness, fear, and humility), his light will spring up in you, and help you to discern. And oh! how sweet will it be for you, who have so often been ensnared, to escape the gins and nets of the fowler, and to dwell in the rest and peace, which your soul has tasted of, and which is the proper place of your habitation.

Indeed, the Lord's thoughts have not been towards you, as you have apprehended all along. His anger was towards the enemy, towards the oppressor, not towards you. Nor does he judge and smite the mind, after that manner that the enemy does accuse; but according to his own nature, sweetness, and tender love. And his judgments and smitings have other effects, than the serpent's accusings and piercings; for *they* do not drive *from* him, but they melt, and tender and prepare the heart for union with him. Oh! keep close to the measure of life, wherein you may discern and distinguish these things; and take heed of letting in one bowing-down thought (how manifest or demonstrative soever), but look up to him who has freely loved, and has abounded in mercy towards you; that in the faith, patience, stillness, and meekness of his seed, you may be found always waiting upon him, in the several exercises, wherewith he shall daily see good to exercise you; till he bring forth his seed in dominion in you, and thereby give you your desired and expected end.

I. P.

9th of the Eighth Month, 1666

TO \_\_\_\_\_

FRIEND,

The vessel, or created nature, poisoned by sin and death, nothing can redeem, but 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 feels any thing of this, feels something of Christ; and being joined to, and partaking of it, partakes 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 pleases 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, is the desire of my soul, in uprightness of heart before the Lord, for you: 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; weaker than I can express, or you 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 shall know and acknowledge in spirit to be so, as that is created and raised in you, which can see and acknowledge it in truth. Oh! wait on the Lord, fear before him, pray for his fear, in the upright breathings (which are not of your spirit's forming, but of his pure begetting); that you may be led by him out of that wisdom which entangles, into that innocency, simplicity, and precious childishness, in which the Father appears to the soul, to break the bonds and snares of iniquity; for hereby the evil spirit not only involves in iniquity, but also begets a belief, as if there could be no perfect redemption therefrom, till the time of redemption be over.

Your truly loving Friend, desiring the right guidance and happiness of your soul, by the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone 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 & ABOUT THE TWO CHALFONTS**

As a father watches over his children, so do I wait, and 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 never yet repented either waiting for him or hearkening to him. But if I have hearkened at any time to any thing 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 matter of loss and sorrow to my soul.

Now, O my Friends, 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 principle of life, and the true, feeling sense. There is that near you which watches to betray. O the God of my life, joy, peace, and hope, watch over your souls, and deliver you from the advantages which at any time it has against any of 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! Oh that no other seed may, at any time, usurp authority over it; but that you may know the authority and pure truth which is of God, and therein stand, in the pure dominion, over all that is against him. For, in the principle of life, which you have known and received in measure, is dominion; and you therein preserved are in the dominion over the impure and deceitful one; and that judging in you has power to judge all impurity and deceivableness, as the light thereof pleases to make it manifest to you; but out of that you will easily become a prey, and set up darkness for light, and account light darkness; and then a wrong wisdom, confidence, and conceitedness will get

up in you, and lead you far out of the way and spirit of truth. Oh, my dear Friends, that that may be kept down in you which is forward to judge, to approve or disapprove; and the weighty judgment of the seed be waited for. And oh do not judge, do not judge, before the light of the day shine in you, and give forth the judgment; but stand and walk in fear and humility, and tenderness of spirit, and silence of flesh, that the Lord be not provoked against any of you, to give you up to a wrong sense and judgment, to the hurt of your souls. And mind your own states, and the feeling 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; so will you 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; and in that breathing, longing spirit towards you was it in my heart at this time to write unto you.

The Lord God of my mercies, hope, and life, watch over you for good, and keep your hearts in the pure and single watch; that the enemy (by any subtle device of his) break not in upon you; nor you, by any temptation, be allured or drawn from the Lord; but may 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

### **POSTSCRIPT**

Thus, feel after that which has gathered you to the Lord; and then also, in that, you will feel the life, freshness, and glory in the Lord, of those who have been made instrumental to gather you, and are still serviceable in his hand and leadings, to build you up; and then that which is ready to hearken to and receive prejudices, will be kept down, and the pure life will live over it, which he that feels has joy and peace and rest in God.

And Friends, you that are weak, bless God for the strong; you that have need of a pillar to lean upon bless God, that has provided pillars in his house; and, in fear and the guidance of his Spirit, make use of these pillars; who are faithful, and have ability from God, in his power and glorious presence with them, to help to sustain his building, even as they had ability from the Lord to gather unto him. He that despises him that is sent, despises Him that sent him; and he that undervalues any gift, office, or work, that God has bestowed upon any person, despises the wisdom and disposal of the Giver. Are all fathers? Have all overcome the enemy? Are all grown up in the life? Are all stars in the firmament of God's power? Has God made all equal? Are there not different states, different degrees, different growths, different places, etc.? Then if God has made a difference, and given degrees of life, and gifts different, according to his pleasure; what wisdom and spirit is that which does not acknowledge this, but would make all equal? O my Friends! fear before the Lord; honor the Lord in his appearances, and

in the differences which he has made among the children of men, and among his people. He gave prophets of old, and the rest of the people were not equal with them. He gave evangelists, apostles, pastors, teachers, etc., and the other members of the churches were not equal with them. He has given fathers and elders now, and the babes and young men are not equal with them. Thus it is, in truth, from the Lord; and that which is of God in you, will so acknowledge it.

Therefore watch, every one, to feel and know his own place and service in the body, and to be sensible of the gifts, places, and services of others; that the Lord may be honored in all, and every one owned and honored in the Lord, and no otherwise.

I. P.

26th of the Eleventh Month, 1666

**TO M. E.**

DEAR M. E.,

I found true unity with your letter, and a tender desire springing in my heart to the Lord for you, that as he has in mercy quickened and gathered you to himself, out of the nature and spirit of this world, so he would please, through the same tender mercy, to preserve you in that which gives the sense of his goodness, and enables to walk worthy thereof.

My dear and tender love to your sister. O fear the Lord, and watch over one another in love, faithfulness, and meekness of spirit; and be not of a distrustful spirit, but trust your father in every trial, temptation, condition, or strait.

Your friend in the truth, and for the truth's sake,

I. P.

27th of 11th Month, 1666

**TO THE SINGLE, UPRIGHT-HEARTED, AND 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? and have you felt meltings of spirit, and bowings before him, with praises to his name therefor? Indeed, my request is to the Lord for you, that he would please to keep you truly sensible of what he already is to you, and of what he has already done for you; that he would also, of his tender mercy and great goodness, visit you yet further, increase life in you, cause faith to abound, give you to dwell in his power, and always abide in his seed, and feel that to be your hope, peace, joy, life, and strength continually; that you may more and more give thanks unto him, as you feel his pure life arising in you, and death and the grave

swallowed up thereby.

Ah! my friends, can we ever forget the lost and miserable estate, 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 need God, and to lie open to the furious assaults of the enemy; when you felt no strength, nor knew where to retire, to keep out any hurt, any temptation, any vain thought and imagination, or to give you any grounded hope in the goodness and mercy of the Lord? How did you mourn? how did you cry out and pine away in your iniquities day and night! and knew not which way to look, nor what to wait for! Are there not among you, who have known this state, and felt something of that which I now relate? Sure I am, there are upon the earth, who can witness it to the full, 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, is there any of you (I know to whom I speak, even to the sensible, to the diligent, to the faithful among you), who cannot in truth witness as in God's presence, concerning the arm and power of his salvation, which you have often felt? insomuch that you can sing that song, "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets." Do you not know the house of his servant David, with the horn of salvation in it, and that horn raised up to you for your defense and comfort? Yes, do you not daily feel the Lord ministering out salvation to you from it? Are not your enemies daily overcome by the faith, which he has given you in his power? May I not say to you, where is the strength of the tempter? Have you not felt the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent? so that, in the fear of the Lord, and in the strength, virtue, and dominion of his life manifested in you, you can say, though as yet something tremblingly, Where are those temptations, those lusts, vain thoughts, and imaginations, which once I was overcome by and overrun with? Surely, I may speak thus; for I know assuredly, that the power of the Lord God, as it is lifted up in any of you, scatters these, and gives you dominion over them. For the life and its power are given as bulwark and weapon of war against iniquity and its power; and, where it is received, it opposes, wars, strives, until it overcome.

And, this is that which gives the victory and overcoming; namely, faith in the seed. The seed felt, the soul joined to it, faith in it and from it given to the soul. Then it becomes the Leader, the mighty undertaker for the soul, and overcomes its snares and enemies for it; and, when it has overcome them, they are overcome indeed. And then the soul lies down in peace, dwells in peace, feeds on the living nourishment, in the green pastures of life, in peace. 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, stretches out his wings there, is a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night there! He has raised up his glorious life in that heart, whereof he is very choice; and he 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.

O my soul, travel on! O dear Friends! do you also travel on, into the fulness 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 feel yet a further gathering into it, and a growing up in it; and give yourselves up to it, that it may overspread and cover you. And the Lord God of life

daily open it, and manifest it more and more in you and to you; that you may be more found in him, and yet more acceptable and pleasing in the eyes of your God; and may sing praises unto him, not only at the foot of the hill, in some true proportion and measure of his life, but in the very heights of Zion, even in the fulness of the measure of your stature in Christ; which you are all diligently to press after, till you arrive at. And then there is no more to be done, but to spread abroad into, and drink in of, and live in, the full pleasure and safety of life forever! Then may you eat freely of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and draw water, with joy, out of the wells of salvation!

Therefore feel, oh! feel, in spirit, the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and be daily looking up to that, which quickens to God, and keeps fresh and lively in him; that none of you grow slothful, drowsy, or negligent, and so, unfaithful in relation to the great talent which God has put into your hands; and so the Lord be provoked against you, and allow the enemy to tempt and prevail upon you; that a veil come over your hearts again, and the air thicken, and the earthly nature cover the seed; and he, that 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 feeling; that the heavenly voice, which drew you out of the earth, may be daily heard further instructing you, and gathering you more and more up into him, who is your life. So 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 of ever dallying with again! Oh never hearken to the tempter! but pray to the Father, that you may discern his baits, and at no time consult or reason with him; but still wait, in every thing, to feel the motion, guidance, quickening, and sweet, pure, heavenly leading of the spirit of your Father!

Has the Lord spoken peace to you, peace which passes man's understanding, and only flows from him? has he given you any proportion of this precious peace? Oh! may he watch over you, and preserve you in that wisdom, in those heavenly instructions, in that heavenly life, divine power, and holy conduct, wherein you met with that peace, and wherein alone you can enjoy and possess it! and keep you out of all manner of sin, lust, and foolishness of the fleshly mind and spirit; for the peace is not there. That is the fruit of the enemy to your peace, and it has of his nature in it; it always breaks your peace, and sows distance, difference, and division, between the Giver and Maker of your peace and you. Do you not always (you that are in the true sense, and have received the holy understanding) feel it thus, and know it to be thus? it is an eternal truth, and the eternal eye, wherever it is opened, witnesses and seals to it. 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 wait, to this let your minds be still turned, and in it still abide; and the power and glory of eternal life will daily, more and more, appear in you, yes, 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 the bowels of 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; that you may feel it daily go on, yes, mightily preserved and carried on by him, even till it be finished, and the top stone laid; and your souls, in the true and full sense of life, cry, *Grace, grace*, to Him that laid the foundation, raised up, defended, and carried on the building, and now, at length, has perfected it. And thus, whatsoever you have hitherto



witnessed in measure, you shall then witness in fulness; and see that all the promises of God are of a precious nature, and 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 breathings after it, in your joinings to it, in your abidings and waitings upon him in it; and the Lord God give you to breathe after it, give you to join to it, give you to abide always, and wait upon him in it, and never to hearken to, and go out after, a contrary spirit and wisdom; but keep you in the simplicity, lowliness, humility, and tender spirit which is in Christ Jesus, to the praise of his own name, and preservation and joy of your hearts before him forever, amen!

Written in the tender bowels and motion of the pure life, from the place of my confinement in Aylesbury.

I. P.

1st of Third Month, 1667

### **TO FRIENDS IN AMERSHAM**

FRIENDS,

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand, if there has been any slip or fall; and waiting till the Lord gives sense and repentance, if sense and repentance in any be lacking. Oh! wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that you may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly one with another. And then, you will be a praise to the Lord; and any thing that is, or has been, or may be, amiss, you will come over in the true dominion, even in the Lamb's dominion; and that which is contrary shall be trampled upon, as life rises and rules in you. So watch your hearts and ways; and watch one over another, in that which is gentle and tender, and knows it can neither preserve itself, nor help another out of the snare; but the Lord must be waited upon, to do this in and for us all. So mind Truth, the service, enjoyment, and possession of it in your hearts; and so to walk, as you may bring no disgrace upon it, but may be a good savor in the places where you live, the meek, innocent, tender, righteous life reigning in you, governing over you, and shining through you, in the eyes of all with whom you converse.

Your Friend in the Truth, and a desirer of your welfare and prosperity therein.

I. P.

Aylesbury, 4th of Third Month, 1667

### **FOR 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, which will teach you how to do well, and how to avoid the evil, if your minds be turned to it. And the same thing will witness to you, when you do well, — and 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 piece of learning that I desire to find you in. And your master or any one of the family that turns you to the witness, reminds you of the witness, reproves you for not hearkening to or obeying the witness, O! 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 it is brutish. That is the dark spirit, which would please itself in its dark ways, and therefore loves not the light which makes them manifest and reproves them: and that spirit 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; — that spirit therefore debases man. Therefore mind the witness 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 defiles the mind: O! my children, wait for the cleansing, — watch for that which cleanses the foolish way of children, which is that which discovers 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 — there is something which would be feeding and pleasing that vain mind; and there is something near you, appointed by God to yoke it down. O! give not scope to vanity, it will be an occasion of woe and misery to you hereafter. But the yoke which keeps under the vain mind, O! take that yoke upon you; and 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 is, (which will also flow from the first,) — 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, — avoiding all rude, rough, bold, unbecoming carriage towards all; honoring your mother and me, as God teaches and requires; dearly cleaving to one another in the natural relation, which is of God, wherein you are loved, [having] even a great proportion of natural affection and kindness one to another. — — — So to the servants, carry yourselves very lovingly, sweetly, meekly, gently; 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; not disputing and talking, which becomes not your age and place; but watching what you may observe of good in them, and what you may learn of those that are good, and how you may avoid any such evil, as you observe in any that are evil. Thus your time will be spent in profit, — and you will feel the blessing of God and of your parents, and 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 — and have been much grieved when I hear of any ill concerning you, — it being more matter of trouble and sorrow to me, than my imprisonment, or any thing else I suffer, or can suffer from man.

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

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 first take notice of that 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 the testimony of his witness in you, whereby he did it; and watch that you be not overtaken in it for 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, — O! for shame! forbear accusing or blaming another: and 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 that is the bad spirit and nature, (which God will sharply punish,) that is ready to accuse others: and though it be never so bad and guilty, yet 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 become your teacher, guide and preserver, and pour down his blessings upon you; and you will be a comfort to me and your mother, and an honor to his Truth; and He also may 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, you are in his presence at all times; who is a holy and just God, hating that which is vain and evil, and loving that which is good and right before him: and 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 unsufferable pain both of soul and body, if you have been evil, and done that which is evil. And God takes notice 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 that if you turn your back upon his light, and will not hear its reproofs, but will be vain, and idle, and foolish, and rash, and quarreling, and doing that which is naught, and then covering it with lies, and so be as bad, if not worse, than children who were never thus taught and instructed, — God will be exceedingly angry with you; and may in his just judgment and sore displeasure, separate you from his light, 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; — which is his reward, and 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.

O! my children, mind the Truth of God in you; and that 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; that you might be warned of the great danger of neglecting the time of your visitation by God's light and witness in you, and of going 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 every thing that is good, — to the salvation of your souls.

I desire that Friends in the family, 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, that they may reach the witness; but to take heed of upbraiding them, or aggravating any thing, lest they be thereby hardened, and the bad raised and strengthened in them. And, my dear G.\* and Friends, watch over your hearts and ways, that you may be as examples to them; that they may not only read these things from my writing, but in your carriage towards them, and one towards another; that they meet with nothing to strengthen or raise up the bad thing, but to reach the witness, and bring and keep down the evil in them. So the Lord bless your watchfulness, care, and endeavors therein; that I may hear good of them, and be comforted in the mercy and kindness of the Lord towards them.

\*Doubtless his daughter in-law, Gulielma, afterwards the wife of William Penn [editorial note by John Barclay in *Letters etc. of Early Friends* (1841)].

## **FOR MY DEAR FRIENDS, BRETHREN, AND SISTERS IN THE TRUTH, IN AND ABOUT THE TWO CHALFONTS**

FRIENDS,

The Lord will wonderfully teach his people, and wonderfully help them! he will pour of his life and virtue into them, and cause his strength to appear in them, and break forth through them, to the glorifying of his name, and making glad the hearts of those that have breathed after him, and waited for him. Therefore, let us lift up our heads, and "fear the Lord, and his goodness in the latter days?" And let us wait to be made able by him to receive of his riches, and drink in of his fulness, that we may become rich and full in him, and kept empty and poor in ourselves; that the more the life arises in us, the more we may feel our own nothingness, and be to the praise of the riches of his grace and mercy, wherein and whereby he has made us accepted in his Beloved.

And dear Friends, mind the principle, mind the root, into which the Lord has ingrafted us; that we may abide and grow up therein, and daily find and feel the sap thereof springing up in us, and quickening us more and more to God. You know how you entered; even so, you must abide and grow up, even in the light, in the life, in the power, which gathered, preserves, and causes to flourish. So my dear Friends, let us all dwell in our everlasting habitation, and no more go forth, but sink into the kingdom, and wait to feel the dominion, righteousness, holiness, power, and purity thereof, daily revealed more and more in our hearts. For there is no other root or spring of life, than that into which the Lord has gathered us, no other true life and power in any vessel upon the earth, besides that which springs therefrom. Therefore feel, oh! feel that which establishes, and that wherein the establishment is, and your union, life, and strength therein; that you may not be bowed down or overborne by whatever happens, either from within or without; but may feel and enjoy the rest and peace of your souls, in that which is over all, and orders all to the good of those who fear him, and in uprightness of heart wait upon him!

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 23rd of Fourth Month, 1667

### **TO THE FRIENDS AT CHALFONT, IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

O FRIENDS!

Feed on the tree of life; feed on the measure of life, and the pure power thereof, 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: — the bread, the milk, the water, the wine, the flesh and blood of Him that came down from heaven, John 6:51, etc. — 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 thing; for that is it, which also stumbles about the names. But keep to the principle of life, keep to the seed of the kingdom, feed on that which was from the beginning. Is not this meat indeed, and drink indeed! flesh indeed, and blood indeed! The Lord has advanced you to that ministration of life and power, wherein things are known above and beyond 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 you into your habitations; which is pure, living, spiritual, and will cause your souls and spirits more and more to live in and to God, as you eat and drink thereof. So be not shaken or disquieted by the wisdom of the flesh; but feel that which settles and establishes in the pure power.

And the Lord God preserve you, and give you to watch against, and to feel victory and dominion over, all that is contrary to Him in any of you; and which stands in the way of your fellowship with Him, and of your joy and peace in Him.

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 of 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 my days.

Dear George Fox, you may feel my desires and needs more fully than my own heart. Be helpful to me in tender love, that I may feel settlement and stability in the truth; and perfect separation from, and dominion in the Lord over, all that is contrary thereto.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 15th of Fifth Month, 1667

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.

### **TO FRIENDS OF BOTH THE CHALFONTS**

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; and 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; 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, but by a measure of his life felt in the heart, whereby it is made capable of understanding the things of the kingdom. The soul without him is dead: by 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; it sees more, feels more, tastes more, hears more, smells more. Now when the senses are grown up to strength, then come settlement and stability, assurance and satisfaction. Then the soul is assured of, and established concerning, the things of God in the faith, and the faith gives assurance to the understanding; so that doubtings and disputes in the mind fly away, and the soul lives in the certain demonstration, and fresh sense, and power of life. It daily feels the eternal Word and power of life to be, in the heart and soul, 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 on it, and converse with it in spirit. What heart can conceive the righteousness, the holiness, the peace, the joy, the strength of life, that is felt here!

For, Friends, there is no straitness in the Fountain. God is fulness: and it is his delight to empty

himself into the hearts of his children; and he does empty himself, according as he makes way in them, and as they are able to drink in of his living virtue. Therefore, where the soul is enlarged, where the senses are grown strong, where the mouth is opened wide (the Lord God standing ready to pour out of his riches), what should hinder it from being filled? And being filled, how natural is it to run over, and break forth inwardly in admiration and deep sense of spirit, concerning what it cannot utter! saying, oh the fulness, 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 the unbelief, the heart was ready often to say, were unconquerable, and that it should one day die, by the hand of one of other or its mighty enemies, lusts, and corruptions. How has he put an end to doubts, fears, disputes, troubles, wherewith the mind was overwhelmed and tossed! and now he extends peace like a river; now he puts the soul forth 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 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 for evermore!

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, which is one with the fulness, and into which the fulness runs daily and fills it, that it may run into you and fill you. Oh that you were enlarged in your own hearts, as the bowels of the Lord are enlarged towards you! It is the day of love, of mercy, of kindness, of the working of the tender hand; of the wisdom, power, and goodness of our God, manifested richly in Jesus Christ! Oh! why should there be any stop in any of us? The Lord remove that which stands in the way; and, in the faithful waiting on the power which is arisen, the Lord will remove, yes, the Lord does remove; and growth in his truth and power is witnessed by those that wait upon him. So, my dear Friends, be encouraged to wait upon the Lord in the pure fear, in the precious faith and hope which are of him; and you will see and feel he will exalt the horn of his Anointed in you, over the horn of that which is unanointed, and will sweep and cleanse and purify, even till he has left no place for the impure: and then you shall become his full dwelling-place, the place of his rest, the place of his delight, the place of his displaying his pure life and glory; and he will be your perfect dwelling-place for evermore!

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 of this; that every soul may inherit and possess, notwithstanding all its enemies, what it has traveled into, and may also daily, further and further, travel into what is yet before.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 2nd & 3rd of Sixth Month, 1667

## **POSTSCRIPT**

Friends,

Be not discouraged because of your souls' enemies. Are you troubled with thoughts, fears, doubts, imaginations, reasonings, etc.? yes, do you see yet much in you unsubdued to the power of life? Oh! do not fear it; do not look at it, so as to be discouraged by it; but look to Him! Look up to the power which is over all their strength; wait for the descendings of the power upon you; abide in faith of the Lord's help, and wait in patience till the Lord arise; and see if his arm do not scatter what yours could not. So be still before him, and, in stillness, believe in his name; yes, enter not into the hurrying of the enemy, though they fill the soul; for there is yet something to which they cannot enter, from which patience, faith, and hope will spring up in you, even in the midst of all that they can do.

Therefore into *this* sink; in *this* lie hid in the evil hour; and the temptations will pass away, and the tempter's strength be broken, and the arm of the Lord, which brake him, be revealed; and then you shall see, that he raised but a sea of trouble to your souls, to sink himself by; and the Lord will throw the horse and his rider, which trampled upon and rode over the Just in 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 shall 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 a sensible waiting and giving up to the Lord, in the daily exercise, by the daily cross to that in you 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, 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, — in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head and King forever and for evermore!

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 engraven in his heart, and on the palms of his hands? and can he forget us in any thing he does? Shall any thing hurt us? Shall any thing come between us and our life, between us and his love, and tender care over us? What though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither there be any fruit in the vine; what though the labor of the olive should fail, and the fields yield no meat; what though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; may we not for all this rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation? And what though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; what 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 thereof, 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 provide also sufficient for the outward? Yes, shall he not bear up the mind, and be our strength, portion, armor, rock, peace, joy, and full satisfaction in every condition? For it is not the condition makes 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, with the creatures, or without the creatures, as it pleases him: and he that has him, he that is with him, he that is in him, cannot lack. Has the spirit of this world content 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, content, and delight in his love? And does not the love, the peace, the joy, the rest felt, swallow up all the bitterness and sorrow of the outward condition?



The seed, the godliness, the uprightness, 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 lives by his faith; and he that is in union with the just, lives by the faith of the just, and takes no more care than the lilies, but leaves the care of all to him, to whom it properly belongs, and who has taken it upon him; who nourishes, clothes, preserves, and causes the lilies of the field to grow and flourish in beauty and glory: and shall he not much more clothe, nourish, and take care of his own lilies, the heavenly lilies, the lilies of his 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; but 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 in the 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 so the preservation of the poor and needy shall be felt to be in his name; and glory shall be sung to his name over all, which is a strong tower, a mighty, impregnable rock of defense against all assaults and dangers whatsoever; which they that have trusted therein have already experienced it to be; and they that continue trusting therein, shall always experience it so to be, in all trials and dangers, whatever may happen, of what kind soever, even to the end. Amen.

TO \_\_\_\_\_

DEAR FRIEND,

You have had the path of salvation faithfully testified of to you, and have come to a sense of the thing; even to the feeling of *that*, whereby the Father begets life, and manifests his love and peace in and to the soul. Now, what remains? but that you look up to the Lord, to guide your feet in this path, and to preserve from that which darkens and leads out of the way; that you may pass 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: yes, there is so. But your soul lacks, and does not enjoy these things. Well, but how may you come to enjoy them? There is no way, but union with the seed; 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." Would you feel your soul's rest in Christ? You must know the seed's voice, hear it, learn daily of him, become his disciple; 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; all that is of life easy, and transgression hard, unbelief hard: yes, you will find it very hard and unnatural, when the nature of the seed is grown up in you, either to distrust the Lord or hearken to his enemy. And then you will change that dwelling-place (into which Satan brings dark thoughts, suggestions, and reasonings) for the dwelling place which is from above, which is the habitation of the righteous; 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, the arm of the Lord is mighty, and brings mighty things to pass; and that 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?) and come into and abide in the path, wherein its mighty, powerful operations are felt and made manifest! And, oh that you may find ability, to watch against that which bows down, and not so let in, as you have done exceedingly, to the grievous wounding and distressing of your soul! For the enemy's dark suggestions work according to their nature; and if you let them lie upon you, how can they but darken, afflict, and perplex you?

Therefore, in the evil hour, fly from all things that thus arise in you; and lie still, feel your stay, till his light, which "makes manifest," arise in you, and clear up things to you. And think not the time of darkness long, but watch, that your heart be kept empty, and your mind clear of thoughts and belief of things, till He bring in something, which you may safely receive. Therefore, say to your thoughts, and to your belief of things (according to the representation of the dark power, in the time of your darkness), "Get you hence!" And if that will not do, look up to the Lord to speak to them; and to keep them out, if they be not already entered, or to thrust them out if they be already got in. And if he do not so presently, or for a long time, yet do not murmur or think much, but wait till he do. Yes, though they 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, own them not; and your bosom will, notwithstanding, be 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 this of him: and, becoming faithful to him therein, you will find your darkness abate, and its strength more and more broken in you; and you will not only feel and taste a little, now and then, but also come to possess and inherit, and rejoice before the Lord in your portion.

Your Friend in the truth, which changes not, but is pure, and preserves pure forever.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 28th of Seventh Month, 1667

**TO M. S.**

DEAR M. S.,

It is in my heart at this time to write to you, not in the will, wisdom, and affections of a man, but in the tender love and melting bowels which are of God; beseeching you to take heed of that wisdom which (under subtlety and disguise) leads from the nature, spirit, and power of truth; raising up another thing in the heart for the witness and truth of God, with which it bewitches the mind, and then wipes its lips and says, It has done no harm; but others are guilty, and my spirit and ways are innocent in the sight of the Lord, and I feel his justification and clearness before him therein.

O! M.S. if you be entangled by that deceitful wisdom, if another thing get up in you which is not of the truth (of the true innocency and simplicity, whatever it appears to you), then you can not hear the voice of the prophet, which you once heard, nor stand to the testimony which it gave you to bear; but will warp and decline from (in the subtlety and specious pretenses) what you took up in the uprightness and simplicity of truth; and, not hearing the voice of that prophet, you will err more and more, and grow strong, wise, and hard in your error, even till at length the Lord be provoked to cut you off by his spirit and power from among his people.

3d of the 8th 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 so to do. Now, if the Lord make it useful to you, you will have cause to bless his name; and so shall I also, who heartily desire the life and welfare of your soul in the living God, and your avoiding all such snares as the enemy lays to betray, and to keep it 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, of which gift they were to walk worthy, and to be thankful for it.

And in these days, the Lord has given gifts to some for this 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. For those that gather the soul to the Lord, they also are appointed to watch over the soul, in the same power and authority that gathered. Now, that which is of God in any heart, being heeded, will teach to make use of the gift and ministry which is of him; and it cannot be despised, but God is despised; nor can it be neglected, without loss and danger to the soul that neglects it. For God is wise, and his ordinances, his ministry, his gifts, are weighty, and his blessings go along with them. Who have been gathered to him in these days, but by his ministry which he has appointed and sent to gather? and who have been preserved, but those who have waited on the Lord, and been subject to his Spirit in the same ministry which has gathered? Mark, brother, in every age, God's ministers have been despised. Moses and all the prophets were despised in their day. What! [said the despisers] 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; for this always teaches to reverence, in subjection to the Lord, the ministry which is of the anointing. "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 easy still, 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 so to do. It is an easy matter to have objections enough 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, wherein and whereby they minister, — this requires a true eye, and a heart

opened by the Lord.

Ah brother! this is a snare, wherein many have been caught in former ages, and in this age also, which it is easy falling into, but the preservation out of it, is not easy, but only by the power and mercy of the Lord. And blessed are those, whom the Lord so favors as to preserve out of it, and to remove from them those prejudices and devices, whereby they are entangled. Dear brother! when I am in the pure sense before the Lord, and my spirit opened by him, and *you* presented before me; I could even beg most earnestly of the Lord, that he would open your eye, and give you a true sight of your state, and 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 therefrom, what he, in tender love and mercy, holds out to you.

And, 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, as, in the leadings of the Lord and waiting upon him, you find freedom thereunto. Indeed, brother, I have had, for a long time, a deep sense of danger towards you: the Lord prevent it, that your soul may live to him, and not die from him! There is a wisdom, a will near 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 might be kept by him in that which knows the drawing; then will you hunger and thirst after the righteousness of his kingdom, and long after times of meeting and assembling with his people; and find your sense of them living, and your life refreshed therein. For, God is with his people, of a truth, 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 death has not come over his people, whatever the enemy suggests, where he gets an ear open: but life grows more and more in freshness and into dominion in them. O brother! the Lord fully gather you into and preserve you in that, wherein you may feel this in your *own particular, wherein you may feel the freshness of life, and the power thereof in them; that your heart also, may be as a watered garden, and as a living temple, wherein the pure, living God dwells!*

I am satisfied in my heart, that not only my love, but my life speaks to you. Oh that you could hear, and feel, and fear, and bow down before the Lord! that he might, in his due season, raise you up in his life and power among his people, purifying you, and preserving you pure and living to him forever.

## POSTSCRIPT

DEAR BROTHER,

The desire of my heart to the Lord for you is, that he would open and keep open in you the eye 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 and holy witness.

Great has been the subtlety, and deep has been the error from the truth; and many who seem to be Jews are not, but have erred from the Spirit, life, and power, wherewith they were at first convinced, and whereby they were at first led. And in these, the enemy has raised up a seat of prejudices, and strong-holds against the ministry and power of the living God; but those that are of the right seed bless the Lord, beholding his work, while others slight it, and are expecting something else; they bless also

the church which the Lord has built, and the ministry which he has sent forth to gather and build it.

O brother! there is a high-mindedness in *some* which takes upon it to judge beyond its growth and capacity; and there is a fear in the hearts of *others*, lest any thing in them should get up, or judge, or be any thing, beyond or beside the pure Truth; *this* teaches to honor and prefer those, whom the Lord has preferred, *the other* has accusations and pleas against them; *the one* of these witnesses preservation from God, *the other* is left to fall. Dear brother, believe a traveler in the path of life (the Lord God raise up in you that which can believe), the enemy, with great subtlety, has laid his snares, has taken many in his snares, even in the snares which he laid by his instrument, J – P —; and many did let in his spirit before they were aware, and are at this day (unknown to their own hearts) entangled therein. The Lord God will terribly appear against such (indeed it is truth), unless they bow to his light, acknowledge their error from the truth, and come back to the body by repentance, and turning from that, wherein this spirit has entangled them.

Dear brother, it is my desire that you may not perish, but feel the carrying on of the work of salvation in you; 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 of yourself, you are not able to see. Remember this counsel; your life is wrapped up in it; for you have need of the helps, which the Lord, in his tender mercy, has provided, and can not be safe without them.

Your dear Brother, in the unity of nature, longing after perfect sense of you, and unity with you, in the pure life.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 7th of Eighth Month, 1667

TO \_\_\_\_\_

DEAR FRIEND,

I have heard that you have something against W.R. whereupon you forbear coming to meetings to his house; which you ought seriously weigh and consider, that your path and walking herein may be right and straight before the Lord. Is the thing, or are the things, which you have against him, fully so as you apprehend? Have you seen evil in him, or to break forth from him; and have you considered him therein, and dealt with him as if it had been your own case? Have you pitied him, mourned over him, cried to the Lord for him, and in the tender bowels of love and meekness of spirit, laid the thing before him? And if he has refused to hear you, have you tenderly mentioned it to others, and desired them to go with you to him; that what is evil and offensive in him might be more weightily and advantageously laid before him, for his humbling, and for his recovery unto that which is a witness and strength against the evil? If you have proceeded thus, you have proceeded tenderly and orderly, according to the law of brotherly love, and God's witness in your conscience will justify you therein. But if you have let in any hardness of spirit, or hard reasonings against him, or hard resolutions, as relating to him, the

witness of God will not justify you in that. And if at any time hereafter you have any thing against others, oh learn from that of God in you to show bowels of compassion towards them, as the Lord has had pity on you. And keep to his witness in your heart. Wait to feel the seed, and to keep your dwelling therein, that you may abide in the peace and rest thereof, and not depart out of your habitation, out of the sense of truth; for that will let in temptation upon you, give the enemy strength against you, and fill your soul with anguish and perplexity. So the Lord God of infinite tenderness renew his mercy upon you, and keep you in that, wherein his love, life, rest, joy, peace, and unspeakable comfort of his holy Spirit (which is able to keep the mind out of all the snares and temptations of that which is unholy), is felt and witnessed, by those who are taught and enabled by him to abide and dwell in that into which he gathered them, and in which he has pleased to appear unto them.

This is in the love and tender goodness of the Lord to you, from your friend in the truth, and for the truth's sake,

I. P.

13th of 10th Month, 1667

### TO BRIDGET ATLEY

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If your heart come to feel the seed of God, and to wait upon him in the measure of his life, he will be tender of you as a father of his child, and his love will be naturally breaking forth towards you. This is the end of all his dealings with you, to bring you here, to make you fit and capable of entering and abiding here. And he has changed, and does change your spirit daily; though it be as the shooting up of the corn, whose growth cannot be discerned at present by the most observing eye, but it is very manifest afterwards that it has grown. My heart is refreshed for your sake, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness towards you; and that the blackness of darkness begins to scatter from you, though the enemy be still striving the same way to enter and distress you again. But wait to feel the relieving measure of life, and heed not distressing thoughts, when they rise ever so strongly in you; no, though they have entered you, fear them not, but *be still awhile, not believing in the power which you feel they have over you*, and it will fall on a sudden.

It is good for your spirit, and greatly to your advantage, to be much and variously exercised by the Lord. You do not know what the Lord has already done, and what he is yet doing for you therein. Ah! how precious it is to be poor, weak, low, empty, naked, distressed, for Christ's sake, that way may be made for the power and glory of his life in the heart. And oh! learn daily more and more to trust him and hope in him, and not to be affrighted with any amazement, nor to be taken up with the sight of the present thing; but wait for the shutting of your own eye upon every occasion, and for the opening of the eye of God in you, and for the sight of things therewith, as they are from him. It is no matter what the enemy strives to do in your heart, nor how distressed your condition is, but what the Lord will do for you, which is, with patience, to be waited for at his season in every condition. And though sin overtake, let not that bow down; nor let the eye open in you, which stands poring at that: but wait for

the healing through the chastisement, and know there is an Advocate, who, in that hour, has an office of love, and a faithful heart towards you. Yes, though you can not believe, yet be not dismayed thereat; your Advocate, who undertakes your cause, has faith to give: only do you sink into, or at least pant after the hidden measure of life, which is not in that which distresses, disturbs, and fills you with thoughts, fears, troubles, anguish, darkness, terrors, and the like; no, no! but in that which inclines to the patience, to the stillness, to the hope, to the waiting, to the silence before the Father: this is the same in nature, with the most refreshing and glorious-visiting life, though not the same in appearance: and if your mind be turned to it, not minding but overlooking the other, you will find some of the same virtue springing up in your heart and soul, at least to stay you.

In and through these things, you will become deeply acquainted with the nature of God, and know the wonderful riches and virtue of his life, the mightiness of his power, and the preciousness of his love, tenderness of his mercy, and infiniteness of his wisdom, the glory also, and exactness of his righteousness, etc.: you will be made large in spirit to receive and drink in abundantly of them; and the snares of the enemy will be so known to you and discerned, the way of help so manifest and easy, that their strength will be broken, and the poor, entangled bird will fly away singing, from the nets and entanglements of the fowler; and praises will spring up, and great love in your heart to the Forgiver and Redeemer. Oh wait, hope, trust, look up to your God! Look over that which stands between! Come into his mercy! Let in the faith which opens the way of life, which will shut out the distrusting and doubting mind, and will close up the wrong eye, that lets in reasonings and temptations, the wrong sense, and death with them.

Thus may you witness, in and through your Redeemer, the abundance of his life and peace.

I. P.