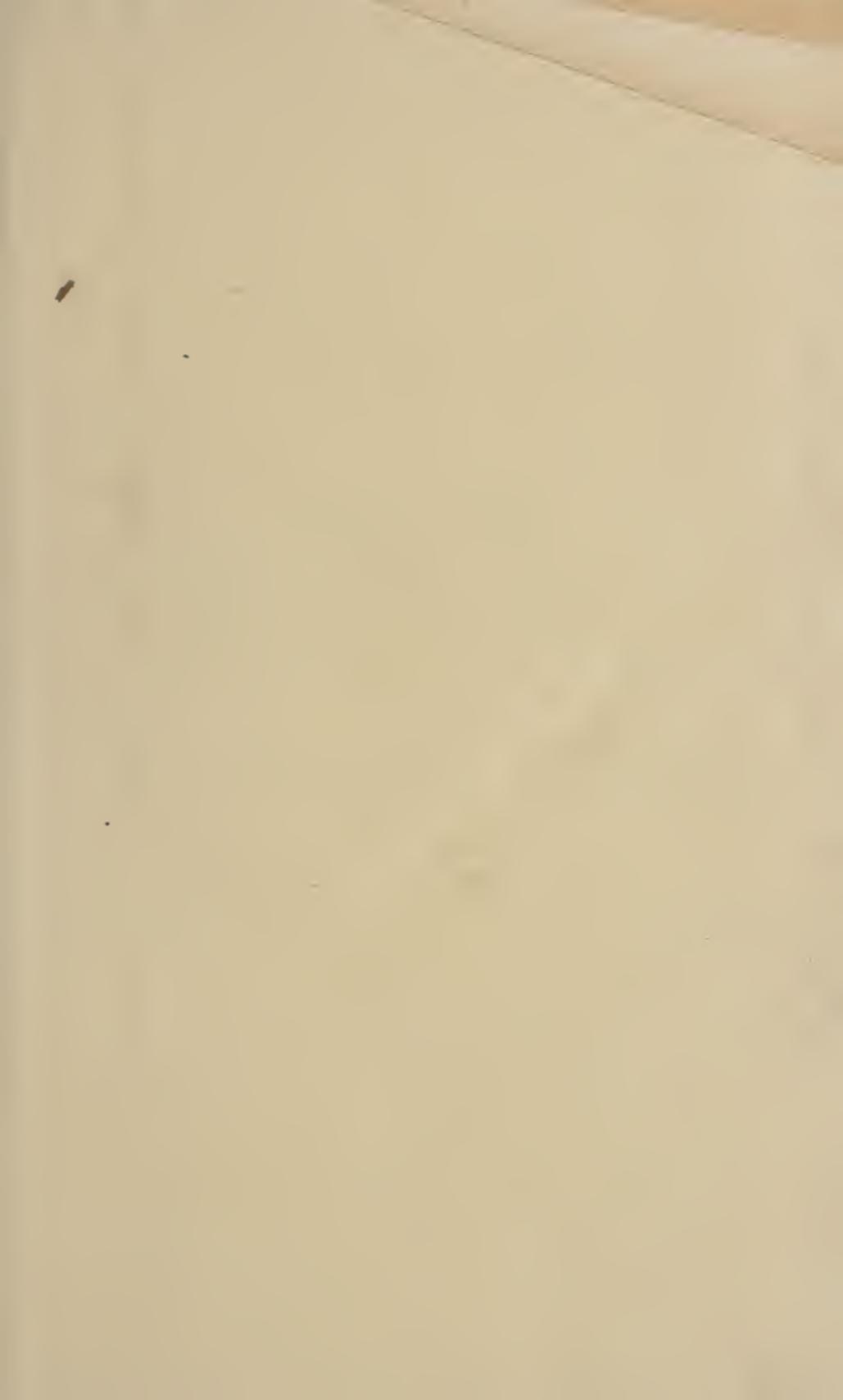


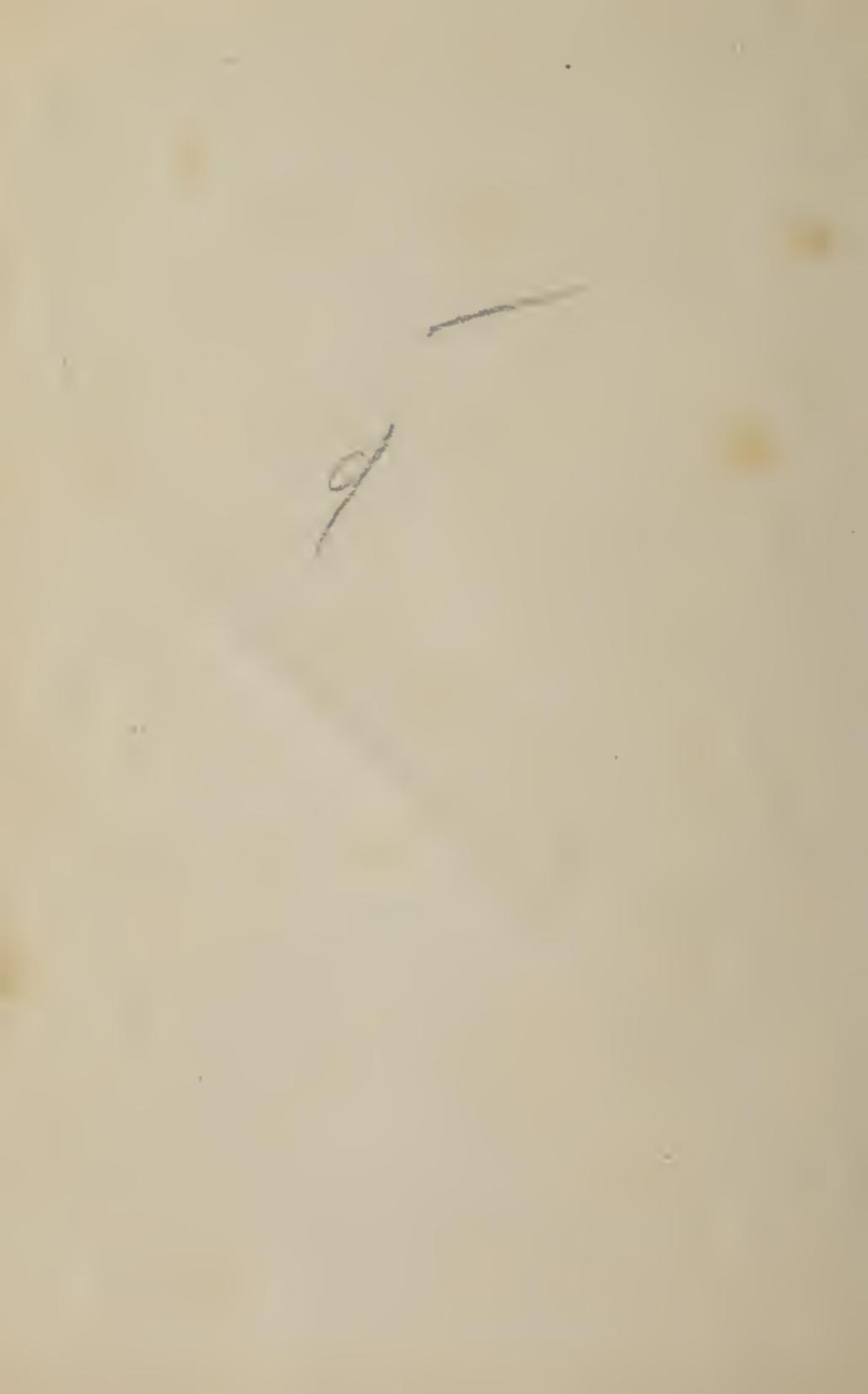
SELECTIONS
FROM
THE EPISTLES &c.
OF
WILLIAM BENNET

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Bennit, William, d. 1684.
Selections from the
Epistles, &c. of William





SELECTIONS
FROM THE EPISTLES, &c.
OF
WILLIAM BENNET.

SELECTIONS
FROM THE EPISTLES, &c.

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THEOLOGICAL SEM

OF

WILLIAM BENNETT,

AN EARLY MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN THE
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS ;

WHO, AFTER SUFFERING LONG AND PATIENTLY FOR HIS
TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH, DEPARTED THIS LIFE
IN THE COUNTY GAOL, AT IPSWICH,
WHERE HE WAS A PRISONER FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE ;

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A Memoir

OF HIS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND CHARACTER.

“ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—ROMANS, viii. 18.

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P R E F A C E.

PERHAPS little more need be said on behalf of the following pages, than that they exhibit a lively specimen of the patience, meekness, humility, and Christian zeal which abounded in the Society of Friends at the time of its early existence.

In the character of William Bennit, from whose writings this little compilation is taken, these fruits of the Spirit appear to have been very conspicuous.

The first part of the "Memoir" is taken from a piece in his works, entitled, "The Work and Mercy of God conducing to his praise, or a demonstration of the visitation of God's love to my soul in the days of my youth;" the remaining part is extracted from testimonies concerning William Bennit, written by two of his friends and

fellow-sufferers for the truth: and although, for the sake of brevity, some parts of these, and also of the other pieces, as they stand in the original publication, dated 1685, are omitted, yet it is believed that these "Selections" will not, on that account, prove the less instructive; and that the abridged form in which they are now offered, will obtain for them a more extensive circulation.

T. C.

Kingston on Thames.

MEMOIR OF WM. BENNIT.

WILLIAM BENNIT was a minister of the Gospel among the people called Quakers, soon after the rise of that people, and was one who partook largely of the persecution and sufferings to which they were, for many years after their first appearance, exposed. It appears, that during the latter part of his life he resided, when not deprived of his liberty, at Woodbridge, in Suffolk. In an account of his religious experience, written by himself, he says, "When I was but young in years the Lord God of light, life, and power was pleased, in some measure, to visit me by his pure light in my conscience, which many a time checked and reprov'd me for my sins, and sometimes brought trouble upon my mind [on account of them.] But I was not then sensible that it was the light of Christ Jesus which reprov'd and judg'd me for evil, and at times broke my false rest. When I was among idle children, such as were void of the fear of God, I ran into sin and wickedness with them, and took great delight therein; but when I came to be still and alone in the fields, or else-

where, the pure witness of God would arise in me with its reproofs, set my sins in order before me, and bring my evil doings to my remembrance. Then trouble took hold on me for a time, and sin became my burden ; but I soon got from under it into ease and liberty, and went on year after year in rebellion against [this] witness of God in my conscience, taking delight in things which I knew were evil. Yet the Lord, in mercy, hovered over me for good, and sometimes stopped me from speaking or acting the evil that I intended to speak or do, and preserved me out of many gross evils. In those days, when I was alone in the fields, I cried and prayed unto the Lord, and desires were stirring in me after the knowledge of Him, his way and truth ; but I prayed to a God I knew not : I imagined a God afar off, and did not then know it was the Lord who searched my heart, discovered unto me my thoughts, and judged me for sin. I knew not that it was the light and truth of God in my own heart, which sometimes begat desires in me to know the truth, and to walk therein ; but my mind was abroad in carnal ordinances, forms, ceremonies, and traditions of men, and I knew not that it was Truth in me, which sometimes stopped me from lying and swearing ; and when I knowingly told a lie, accused me for it, when no man could accuse me. I may truly say, there was something stirring in me, at times, after the Lord, ever since I was six or seven years of age ; and when I came to be about fourteen years old, and an apprentice, it pleased the God of infinite loving kindness, to visit me more [closely] than before ; yea, he did, by his pure light and gift, pur-

sue me hard, calling to me in my heart to come out of sin, out of evil words and works. Still, (like Samuel, when he was a child,) I knew not that it was the Lord who called; for he was, though near me, as a stranger to me; I knew not his voice, but went astray as a wandering sheep; yet had I desires to know the way to the fold, to know where the Lord feedeth his flock, and causeth them to lie down in peace, quietness, and rest, where none can make afraid; for indeed it was rest I wanted, and true peace in God my soul many a time panted after. Oh, I was oftentimes wounded because of sin; and for want of the enjoyment of the love and peace of God, I went bowed down in spirit day after day, with my eyes filled with tears and my heart with sighing, and I thought there were few, if any, in my condition. Sometimes I would say, in my heart, "Oh, that I were in a desert, solitary place outwardly, (for such was my condition inwardly,) where I might mourn and pour out my tears to the God of mercy, and spread my complaints before him whom my soul thirsteth and panteth after, even "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks." Many a time did I get into a solitary place, to ease my heart a little, by pouring out my tears and complaints to the Lord. In those days many were my prayers, and great the burden under which I went, not then knowing the light of Christ in my conscience to be a stay to my mind and a bridle to my tongue. Many a time I got into a false ease and liberty, into idleness and youthful wildness; but sorrow and trouble would again take hold of my mind, and again would true desires be

renewed in me after the Lord. My heart was often made tender and soft, compassion was in me towards any who I thought were in my condition: a tender love was hidden in my heart towards those that I then thought were the people of God; and I can truly say my heart is open still, and oftentimes pity, love, and tenderness issue from me towards those who are in that condition. Oh, my soul cannot but sympathize with them, and that not without some secret cries unto God on their behalf. It is partly for their sakes that this is published, [with the hope] that it may be of service to some of them; and if the Lord order it so to be to them, or to any, my end herein will be answered.

“ In those days I frequented the meetings of the people called Independents, in Great Yarmouth, whom I then thought to be the people of God; but I saw that many of them, and even some of the chief of them, were not, in life and conversation, what they professed to be: and when I have been among them, in the time of their singing Psalms, the pure witness of God in my own heart, hath, as it were, stopped my mouth, that I could not sing with them; but my heart has been broken into tenderness, and many have been my tears; my outward man hath trembled and been shaken like a leaf that is shaken with the wind. This was before I was called a Quaker, or had seen any of that people. The working of the power of God in my heart did, in some measure, let me see that it was not then a time of singing for me; for I was in a strange land, in the land of captivity, and could not sing the song of Zion;

and this song I may truly say, without the least enmity against that people, (for my soul beareth love and good will towards all men,) they were ignorant of, whilst singing what others had prescribed and made ready for them. I then wanted the enjoyment of the love, joy, peace, and secret presence of God, which makes glad the hearts of the righteous, and causes the lowly and upright to sing the new song, which the living only can sing, even the ransomed of the Lord, who are returned from Babylon to Mount Zion. In all the time of my trouble of mind and travail of spirit, I never made known my condition to any creature, but kept it secret in my heart, pouring out my complaints to God [only]. I would gladly have had some to know how it was with me; but I was straitened in myself, and therefore kept [my state of mind] in obscurity. I still knew not what it was that wrought and strove with me, which did so frequently judge and reprove me for sin, gave me power over many evils which others were overcome withal, and raised strong desires in me after the Lord. I say, I was not then sensible that it was the light of Christ Jesus [which thus strove with me;] nor that I should have taken heed thereunto, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day had more and more dawned, and Christ, the day-star, had arisen in my heart, over all my enemies; but I was still hunting abroad, for that which was within me; the pearl of great price was hidden in my heart; but I knew it not—the kingdom of God was at hand, and was working in my heart, like leaven hid in three measures of meal; but I was gazing for it abroad:

my Saviour was nigh, but I imagined him afar off. In those days no man directed my mind to the light of Christ in my own heart; for the teachers of the people would say, that which troubles a man for his sins is a temptation of Satan, and [thus] instead of directing the mind to the light, they drew away from it. Is it the devil's work to discover, judge, and condemn for sin? Is it not his work to lull people asleep in sin, to cry peace to them in their iniquities, and to keep them satisfied with a profession of God, without the possession of a holy, undefiled life? Is it his work to destroy his own kingdom, which is sin? Surely no; that is the work of Christ, the light of the world. I do now infallibly know, that it was the pure witness of God, the light of his Son, Christ Jesus, a measure of his free grace and truth in my heart, which in those days brought trouble upon me for my sins, and begat good desires in me after the Lord. But, alas, for me! after all this long visitation of the love, goodness, and mercy of the Lord to my soul, and after all this trouble of mind, travail of spirit, desiring and seeking after the Lord, I got into a false ease and wrong liberty, became careless, and by disobedience quenched the strivings of the light of Christ in me, insomuch that I felt little of the burden and sorrow which [before] lay so heavily upon my mind; my face was turned back again into Egypt, which before had been partly turned towards Canaan, the land of light, life, and rest; and I ran into evils which I had formerly, by a secret power, been kept out of. I grew wanton, careless, and wicked; my mind

was taken off from seeking the Lord, and went after the vanity, pleasures, and idleness of the world; delighting much in music and dancing, sporting and gaming, and so made merry over the pure witness of God, by rebelling against it, and rejecting its reproofs and strivings. Oh, the patience and long-suffering of the Lord was large towards me in that day! He who, in his justice, might have cut me off in my sins and rebellion, and thus made me an example of his wrath, waited to be gracious to my soul, day by day and year after year. His mercy and long-suffering was exceedingly large to me, and is not to be forgotten; but in and by the Spirit of Truth am I to be kept in a living remembrance thereof. He would not that I should perish from his presence for ever, and in the sense thereof he is worthy to be praised and honoured by my soul. For after all this, the Lord God, of tender compassion, was pleased to visit my poor soul again—he remembered the poor and needy, the captive exile, to deliver him out of the hand of him that was too strong for him, and to loose him, that he might not die in the pit, and perish in the miry clay. I now heard the everlasting gospel of light, life, and peace preached by his servants, in scorn called Quakers, and the pure witness of God in my heart bore testimony to the truth declared by them. But long it was, after I was in some measure convinced of the truth, before I freely gave up my heart to obey it; yet the Lord, in time, overcame my heart by the power of his love, his unspeakable love, and made me willing to resign my heart in obedience to him and his truth,

to bow to the yoke, to take up the daily cross, despise the shame, and follow him in the way of truth and righteousness. Herein I have found peace, rest, and true satisfaction to my soul; and although it hath been my portion, with many other brethren, sometimes to eat the bread of adversity, and to drink the water of affliction, yet my Teacher and Comforter, whom I witness to be nigh, can none remove from me. He hath been and is with me in the prison-house, and in the low dungeon. That which formerly reproved and judged me for evil, and raised desires in me after the Lord, now keeps me in peace with him, and in fellowship with his people; though I deny not that I have now a greater measure of light and grace than I then had; for although the light or seed of the kingdom be in the unbeliever and unconverted, even as the least of all seeds, yet in whomsoever it is received in faith, love, and obedience, it grows till it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree; under its shadow they sit with great delight, and its fruit becomes sweet to their taste; as a little leaven hid in three measures of meal, it operates in the hearts of those who believe in it, until it hath wrought out the old leaven of malice, sin, and corruption, and leavened the soul into its own nature. The same light which condemned me for sin, when I was in disobedience to it, now saves me from sin, justifies me as I am kept in the faith and obedience of it, and ministers to me rest and peace. So this I assert and affirm experimentally, (against all opposers, gainsayers, and undervaluers of the light,) that the light of Christ in the conscience of that

man or woman who is in unbelief, and in the unconverted state, is one in nature with the light in that man or woman who is in the belief of it, and converted by it: and the light of Christ in the conscience of the drunkard and swearer, that doth check, judge, and reprove him for his sins, if it be believed in, loved, and obeyed, is able to save him from his sins. They who love evil, hate the light, and reject it, do not witness the saving, healing virtue, the restoring, redeeming power of the light; it is to them a judge and condemner; but they who receive it in the love and belief thereof, receive power to become the sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ, of the kingdom of God, which endures for ever.

So blessed be the Lord my God, who is worthy to be praised in the sense of his love, goodness, and grace; and having obtained mercy of Him, and experienced his tender fatherly dealings towards me, my heart is opened with love and good will to all people, desiring their good and eternal welfare in God."

That which now follows is taken from two testimonies concerning William Bennit, written respectively by Edmund Cross and William Pearce, two Friends who suffered imprisonment with him, and who, from their intimate acquaintance with him, appear to have been well qualified to describe his character. "William Bennit was a man wholly given up to serve the Lord, and what he did for Him he did with all his heart. Great was his care over the church of Christ; and when in bonds for the Gospel's sake, he gave forth divers epistles full of heavenly exhortations and comfort. He had the true quali-

fications of an elder and minister of Christ, walking in holiness, meekness, and godly fear; never exalting himself above any, but [showing] himself an example of humility and self-denial. Although he was of a weakly constitution of body, yet when engaged in preaching the Gospel, he was so upheld by the mighty power of God, and carried forth with such fervency and zeal, that there appeared no infirmness in him; and notwithstanding his bodily weakness he often travelled in the service of the Gospel. He had a very good gift in the ministry, and was well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures. That [ardent] love by which he was drawn forth to serve the Lord, flowed from him in the assemblies of God's people, as sweet streams from a pleasant fountain, to the nourishment of the true birth; in the sense whereof his heart was often filled with great strength of life and heavenly courage. He was often concerned to exhort Friends to remember their first love, and the day wherein they received the truth; and although they had experienced much, and witnessed a large increase in the riches of God's kingdom, [still] to stay their minds on the measure of his gift or grace in themselves; reminding them that Jacob was commanded by the Lord, after his many trials and great increase of riches, to go to Bethel, the place where the Lord first appeared to him, there to dwell and erect an altar. He also often put Friends in mind of speaking the pure language, by saying thee and thou to a single person, without respect of persons; and exhorted them to feel the concern of truth upon their spirits, and in the drawing of the love of God, to assemble in his name and fear.

He wrestled much in prayer with the Lord, for the good of all, particularly for such as suffered imprisonment for the testimony of a good conscience. He often prayed that God would be pleased to make the prison as a palace to them, through the incomes of his heavenly life and blessed presence to their souls; that he would comfort such as lay upon a bed of sickness, and support such as travel by sea or land in his work and service; and accompany them with his living power and presence, [in order] that their service might be effectual. He prayed also for his enemies, that it would please the Lord to turn their hearts and open their eyes to see against whom they were striving, that they might behold Him whom, with their sins, they had pierced—repent, be converted, and healed. Thus did the love of God flow from this his servant, not only to friends but to enemies, having so learned of his master, Christ Jesus, whom he faithfully served in his generation.

“The Lord employed him in his vineyard, both to plant and water; and it was his delight to break up untilled ground, often having meetings where no Friends had been before. His Gospel-labours were very much blessed, and through his plain and prevalent ministry many were added to the church.

“He [proved himself] very faithful, not only in word and doctrine, but also in life and conversation. Even his enemies were made to confess that he was a man of an honest, godly, and upright life: not only in the town of Woodbridge, where he dwelt, but wherever he was known, his life

preached truth, his carriage was innocent, and his words were very savoury, ministering grace to his hearers. He was indeed one to whom the Lord had, in a large measure, fulfilled his promise, to 'make a man more pure than fine gold, yea, than the golden wedge of Ophir;' for having been tried in the furnace of affliction, he became a vessel of honour, fitted for the Lord's service; as, saith Solomon, 'Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.'

He was, for his testimony to the truth, cast into divers gaols. The places of his longest imprisonment, and in some of which he was confined at several different times, were Yarmouth, Norwich, Bliborough, Melton, Ipswich, and Edmondsbury. In the last-named place he lay among felons nearly eight years, and was kept so close a prisoner, that during five years of the time he scarcely set his foot over the threshold. [To conclude this brief notice of his sufferings—] on the 12th of the sixth month, 1683, he was, whilst upon his knees in prayer, at a meeting at Woodbridge, violently haled away by a constable, and with several other Friends taken before a justice, who committed them to Melton gaol, for being, as the mittimus declared, at a 'Quakers' meeting, which is contrary to law.' He was kept a close prisoner at Melton till the next sessions, which were held at Woodbridge, where an indictment was preferred against him, for being 'riotously and routcously assembled with many others,' &c. To this charge, (after advancing many sound arguments, to prove the meetings of Friends to

be without any other object than to wait upon and worship the Lord, and therefore in no way hurtful or dangerous to the government, &c. he pleaded not guilty. It was then asked, whether he would give bail for his appearance at the next quarter-sessions, and to be of good behaviour. This he refused to do, knowing he had not misbehaved himself; he was therefore remanded to prison, and again kept very close till the next sessions, when he was, with some other Friends, brought into court and put on trial. Much argument took place between the prisoners and the court; and the jury, after having retired for a considerable time, declared the prisoners not guilty. This highly displeased the chairman, who persuaded the jury to alter their verdict, and find the prisoners guilty of an unlawful assembly; and as if this was not usage sufficiently hard, W. B. although then very weak was sent off, in the latter part of an intensely cold day, (the snow falling very fast all the way,) to Ipswich. It was late in the evening before he reached the prison; and for want of beds, and timely notice to make provision, this tender man was obliged, wet and cold as he was, to sit up all night. It was truly grievous to witness this cruel treatment; yet the innocent sufferer was preserved in patience and resignation, saying, in allusion to this journey, *‘ If it lay in his freedom to go or not, although he might gain much as to the outward he could not go, such was his weakness; yet for the truth’s sake he was freely given up, though it might prove the dissolution of his body, ’* as indeed it so happened, for he never got over it, but continued

to grow weaker, till upon the 23rd of the 4th month, 1684, in the prison-house at Ipswich, the place of his confinement, he finished his testimony, and laid down his head in perfect peace. At the hour of his departure, whilst his dear wife, with several other friends, were sitting by the corpse in retiredness of mind, very sorrowful for their great loss, the love of God broke in upon them in an abundant manner, to their great refreshment and satisfaction.

May we [who survive,] be found working the work of God in our day, by answering his requirements, that so we like this faithful servant of Christ, may finish our course with joy, and lay down our heads in peace !”

AN ADDRESS TO HIS FATHER AND MOTHER.

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

MY endeared love abounds towards you, and in that which hath brought me into true obedience to God and man do I salute you, [desiring] your growth in the spirit of holiness, which growth standeth not in words, but in life and power; wait to feel your increase therein, and decrease in words which are out of the power of God. Many have grown rich in words, have accounted *that* [to be] their growth without the life, and have fed upon the knowledge more than upon life: upon such the famine is to come. Therefore, dear hearts, yea exceedingly dear to me, keep to the measure of God in your own particulars, and be obedient to its operation, for as it is to work upon the soul, so it worketh not without the soul's yielding obedience thereunto; yet [it is] not the soul's work, but the work of God in and upon the soul. For though Christ is come a light into the world, and is the salvation of God, to them who believe in and obey him, yet he is the condemnation of those who believe not in him; the light manifesteth evil, and if the creature yield obedience to the light, it gives him power over evil; yet not the creature's power, but the power of God, which begetteth the will and the deed also.

Therefore perfect obedience to the light the Lord requireth of every one, and daily to watch and wrestle against that which is condemnable by the light; for so long as the creature knowingly lives in that (whether in words

or deeds) that it seeth to be reprovably by the light, it cannot enjoy perfect peace with God; for the peace of God is enjoyed in the light: and truly, if that condemn, the Lord doth not justify. Many believe they are justified in the sight of God, through Christ, although the witness of God lets them see that they are yet in their sins, and condemns them for sin. This faith (or rather unbelief) leads them to conclude that neither themselves nor any others can be made free from all sin on this side the grave, and yet they imagine they are free from it in the sight of God. But beware of that faith, it is not the true faith, the gift of God, which, through Christ, saveth from all sin. It is hard for one in whose heart the wicked one hath seated this faith, or persuasion, to come to live in the life of truth, which is holy; for when the light lets the soul see it is in its sins, brings trouble and condemnation, also a desire in the heart to be freed from sin; even then the wicked one begetteth this persuasion in the creature, that it cannot be freed from all sin here; and this persuasion causes the creature to do despite to the Spirit of grace, and strive to quench its reproofs, and so to get at ease in that wrong belief, and sit down short of the peace of God. So that which begeth desires in the creature to be freed from sin, comes to be veiled and slain. Many thousands are in this state, boasting that they are justified by Christ, and that he hath done all for them, and if they can believe it that is sufficient, although still in their sins.

Now the apostle Paul saith, "If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also

are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Oh! in tender love I beseech you, to beware of that delusion of the wicked one, for it is very dangerous, and a broad way, which the creature is prone to run into. Now there is a great difference betwixt such, who with the light see much sin which they are addicted to, yet to be subdued, and it is their sore burden, and they in the strength of the light wrestle against it, and so find it daily decrease; I say there is a great difference betwixt those who are in this state, travelling out of sin, out of Egypt, where the bondage is, towards Zion, where the freedom is, and such as are set down satisfied, in a false confidence and wrong belief, continuing in sin, and believing they shall not be free from it here. But you know otherwise, therefore abide in the life, [in that life] which is the light of men, the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and is the salvation of God: therein wait, and feel your minds exercised in its operation, for this changeth the mind, the thoughts, the affections, and desires; for as they have been earthly, so they become heavenly; [then] it is the soul's delight to answer the end of the Lord, and to endeavour to walk worthy of his love, and it becomes its life to do the will of God. But before this can be witnessed, the strait and narrow way must be known, felt, and lived in; and there must be a passing through the fire, through the water, through the one baptizing,

which baptizeth into death, and translateth into life. Oh! dear father and mother, keep, I beseech you, to the gift of God in your own particulars, and be obedient to its leadings; therein watch diligently, continually, and with it try your thoughts, words, and intents, before you bring them forth; and if they be reprobable, give them up to the fire to be consumed. Dear hearts, it is in inexpressible love that I write thus unto you: be very wary of speaking of things by contraries, which you are addicted to, for there is no lie of the truth, and he that abideth in the truth is preserved out of the lie; he that loveth the light bringeth his deeds to the light to try them, whether they be wrought in God.

So be not forward to utter words, but feel the light of Christ to guide and lead you, and bring your thoughts and words to it, to try them: now if they be reprobable by the light, then they are to die, and not be brought forth; for if they be, this grieveth the righteous Spirit of God, and breaks your peace with him; for if his witness condemn, he doth not justify, so the creature keeping low in the pure fear and dread of the Lord, dares not do, speak, or think that which it seeth to be vain and evil, if it could gain the whole world by it. But truly [many] professors are out of this condition; though they can talk of the fear of the Lord, scarcely one of a thousand is come into that state. This is a hard saying, who is able to bear it? Yet it is a true saying, though they will not believe it. Oh! the largest talkers, even of the highest sort, are farthest from the life of truth, which is holy; for such are settled on their lees, have been building long,

very high, and have gathered much riches; it is hard for these to lose all, to have their building thrown down, and not one stone left upon another. Oh! the Lord God of compassion is gathering many tender hearts from among them, who hunger and breathe after Him, and are not satisfied with the husks, the shadows, and dead forms in which they dwell; and, poor hearts, they have sought after the Lord, even fervently, day after day, and year after year, but could not find him. Such is the Lord now gathering into his fold, where they shall enjoy their Shepherd, and their souls shall not want.

So once more do I, in tender love, direct you to the gift of God in your own particulars: keep in the fewness of words, for too many words become not those who profess godliness. Let your words be few, and let them savour of the grace of God, which leadeth into a meek, sober, modest, chaste life; that so your upright conversation may preach righteousness, even to the convincing of those who have been as teachers over you, whom ye will come to see, as you keep to the measure of God's [Spirit,] and know them to be a people whose minds are at liberty and at ease in the flesh. Let their knowledge be never so large, their declarations never so high, yet if such come not, and keep not to that which is to be a stay to the mind, a stop to their thoughts, a bridle to their tongues, a light to their steps, their knowledge, their declarations, their works, and their sufferings are all in vain; and a babe of the heavenly birth sees and comprehends them. Well, into the hand of the Lord do I commit you. [May you] be gathered into and preserved

in his pure fear, watchful and diligent in the light, warring and wrestling in the strength of it, against that which you see is to be mortified.

And, dear ones, one thing more I have to say unto you. Beware of condemning one another for that evil which yourselves are addicted to; but first see it subdued and mortified in yourselves, whether it be in word or action, before you condemn others for it, though they be profane people; and when you speak a word of reproof to any, beware of doing it in a light, frothy way, as many do, even in the airy spirit, which bringeth forth the same things in themselves; but let it be done in the sober, solid, seasoned, savoury spirit, that it may reach the witness of God in them unto whom you speak, and then it will be profitable. So the Lord God Almighty preserve me and you, and all his little ones, in his holy awe and dread, and [enable us] to pass the time of our pilgrimage here in fear and trembling.

From your Son,

WILLIAM BENNET.

Bliborough Goal,
5th month, 1661.

A TENDER SALUTATION OF LOVE AND GOOD-
WILL TO PROFESSORS.

THE Lord God Almighty is looking down upon the sons and daughters of men, and beholds many of them as poor scattered sheep, without a

shepherd; wandering as in the waste, howling wilderness; hungry and thirsty, seeking diligently for food upon the barren mountains, running from one broken cistern to another, yet unable to find that which would truly satisfy and refresh their souls; seeking rest, but finding no true rest; desiring to know where the good Shepherd of Israel feeds his sheep and lambs, and where they lie down in quietness, free from the fear of evil.

The Lord hath seen this, and is moved with pity and compassion towards [such as these;] and for his own seed's sake he is in mercy stretching forth the hand of his loving kindness to them, to gather in one the scattered and dispersed, to bring home the wanderers, the prodigals, (who have long fed upon the husks among the swine,) to the Father's house, where there is bread enough, and where water faileth not.

Yea, the Lord of heaven and earth hath lifted up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Jacob, and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. He will return the captivity of his people, and then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad. The stem of Jesse shall stand for an ensign to the people; unto Him shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. He hath righteousness for the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness for the girdle of his reins; He hath put on the garment of vengeance for clothing, and is clad with zeal as with a cloak; He hath on a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

This is he whom the Lord giveth for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, to be

his salvation to the ends of the earth : this is he who maketh all things new, who causeth old things to pass away, and creates a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ; this is he who is the strong arm of God's mighty power, stretched forth to deliver the poor and needy out of the hand of him who is too strong for him—the hand of his loving-kindness, which in mercy is stretched forth towards those who cannot be satisfied with the husks, shells, and shadows, but thirst after Him, the substance. Ah ! dear people ! this is the salvation of God, the Word of eternal life : “ in him was life, and the life was the light of men.” He is “ the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” He had a body prepared him, in which he suffered the will of him that sent him ; was born of the Virgin Mary, was circumcised the eighth day, was baptized by John the Baptist, eat the passover with his disciples, (for he came to fulfil all righteousness,) was betrayed by Judas, judged to die by Pontius Pilate, crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, rose again the third day, (according to the Scriptures,) ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, glorified with the same glory that he had with the Father before the world began. And his disciples, according to his command, waited at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high, and had received the promise of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth ; then they witnessed his word fulfilled, “ He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” This is the immortal Word which was in the beginning, and which Paul preached, to wit Christ within, when he

said, "Who shall ascend, that is to bring Christ down from above, or who shall descend, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead : but the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach." And he exhorted the Corinthians to examine themselves, whether they were in the faith ; to prove themselves ; [adding] " Know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ?" And John, in his writing to the saints, reminds them of that within, which they had heard from the beginning, " Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." " If it shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." " But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you ; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." And as Christ, " the Truth" in them, did teach them, they witnessed the power of God within, the Word nigh in their hearts, the Spirit of God in their inward parts, by which they were led and guided, taught and instructed. " For," saith Paul, " as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ;" and, " if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." " That which may be known of God, is manifest in them." " The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal." " The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present

world." [Thus] the saints felt and knew that in themselves, of which they were born again, even Christ in them, the seed incorruptible, "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." By this they were begotten again unto God; even they who were once as dead stones, were raised up to be living children unto Abraham; they came to feed upon the bread of life, and to drink of the cup of blessing; by one spirit were baptized into one body, and were made to drink into one spirit, wherein they worshipped and served the Lord, and by which their souls were united unto each other, and unto Him, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Ah! dear people! in whose hearts there are true desires, and secret thirsting after the living God, wherever ye are scattered among the many sects, towards you doth my soul yearn with love and good-will, [desiring that you may come to enjoy that which you are seeking after, to possess that [which] you are thirsting for. You, who have been seeking God where you cannot find him, and have been running from mountain to hill, and from hill to mountain, from one broken cistern to another and from one dead form to another, but remain unsatisfied, and are sensible that you still want the enjoyment of the love and sweet peace of God, and groan daily under the burden of sin and corruption, with desires to be set free therefrom; oh! you who have been thus seeking for God afar off, retire inward, wait to know the Lord God near you, his pure Spirit in you, to lead and guide, to teach and instruct you. "God is a spirit," and his teachings are spiritual: He must be known in spirit, and worshipped in

spirit and in truth ; not at the mountain, neither at Jerusalem, not in this set form, nor in the other form, as “ Lo here ! and lo there ! ” In the spirit is the Lord God known and worshipped aright ; and so they who are born of the Spirit, who live in the Spirit and are taught and led by the Spirit of truth, are acceptable worshippers with the Lord. It is the purified sons of Levi, who have passed through the fire, that are purged even as gold is purged, and tried as silver is tried, by Him, the Light of Israel, (who is as a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap,) that can offer unto God an offering in righteousness, and whose offerings are pleasant unto the Lord ; but the polluted sacrifices, the halt, the blind, and the lame, are an abomination unto the God of purity, who is blessed for evermore ! This is a tender invitation unto you, who have been spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which hath not yet satisfied your souls, but are still thirsty for want of drink, and hungry for want of food. Oh ! dear people ! hunt no longer abroad, run no longer from one broken cistern to another, wait no longer at the wells that men have digged, draw no longer at them, for still you thirst again. Oh ! turn your minds inward, and wait to find and feel that in you, which you so carefully (and with sorrow) have been seeking without you, even the water that Christ gives, as he said to the woman of Samaria, “ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” So the water that Christ gives

is within, therefore turn inward, to his pure gift in your own hearts, to his light in your consciences; for that comes from him, and leads to him, the fountain of living water. Dear people, it is not enough to confess and believe that Christ died at Jerusalem for sinners, and that he hath done all for you; for the drunkard and swearer will make a confession of Christ in words, as many professors do, who say, they are justified by Christ, and he hath done all for them; and yet they are still in their sins, in the pride and covetousness, vanity, pomp, and vain glory of the world; in its vain customs, inventions, and traditions, seeking and loving its honour and respect, the praise of men more than the praise of God. It is not enough to confess Christ without, and say you believe in him, &c. except you come to know him made manifest in you, to destroy the works of the devil; for your thus professing and confessing Christ, doth not cleanse your hearts, nor sanctify your souls; but still you see you are bond-slaves unto sin and corruption, and led captive by the lusts and desires of your own hearts. It will be so, dear people, until you turn your minds inward, to the pure light of Christ in you, that discovers the sin and corruption of your hearts. As you come to believe in that, to love and follow that, you will find it working out the old leaven of sin, iniquity, and corruption, and working you into its own nature; and so you will come to see your regeneration wrought by Christ, the immortal Word, to be born again of the seed incorruptible, which must be known within, to bruise the serpent's head, the god of this world, the wicked spirit that leads

man into sin, and which hath been exalted in the heart of man, hath been lord, head, and king there. The holy seed, the pure life hath suffered, hath been "pressed under you, even as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves;" ye like sheep have gone astray, and followed your own way. But, oh! return unto the "good Shepherd," who laid down his life for his sheep, and [who would] gather the scattered into the fold of rest, and cause them to lie down in the fresh pastures of life, where none can make them afraid; to feed and sup with him, who is their life, their rest, their love, and delight. So, dear people, because I fervently desire that you might come to taste of the love and sweet peace of my God, which is that which would satisfy your souls, I beseech you to take heed to that in your hearts, which is as a light that shineth in a dark place, discovering unto you the deeds of darkness and the works of the night to be evil: and fear not that it will deceive you, for it is the sure word of prophecy, unto which you [will] do well to take heed, until the day dawn in your hearts, and light shine out of darkness, and wholly extinguish the night. Give no heed to them who speak evil of the way of the Lord, and count truth to be error, and light darkness. The professing Jews boasted of Moses, the law and the prophets, but when He, whom Moses and the prophets prophesied of, whom the law did figure out, who fulfils the law, who was the life of Moses and the prophets, came unto them, they hated him, and said, "We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not whence

he is ; he is a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend to publicans and sinners : he, through Beelzebub, the prince of devils, doth cast out devils," &c. And truly I may say, (not out of a prejudiced mind towards any, for my soul bears love and goodwill towards all men,) it is the same now with many of the professors in this age, as [it was with] the Jews, who made a large boast and profession of Moses, the law, and the prophets, and hated Him, [who is] the life of them ; [so these] make a large boast of Christ in words, and of his dying in Jerusalem, (which I believe he did, according as the Scriptures testify,) and that he hath done all for them, and if they can but believe it, that is enough, &c. And yet, whilst they are thus professing him in words, behold many of them are enemies to his life, and so enemies to him whom they boast of, who is the Word that was in the beginning, in whom was life, and the life was the light of men : "The true light," saith John, "that lighteth every man that cometh into the world ;" but the professors say, it is a natural light, which convinceth wicked men of sin in their own hearts, and judgeth them for evil doing, and so call the life of the Word, which is the light of men natural ; it is a natural conscience, say some, it is an insufficient light, it is a common grace, &c. ; (so common it is indeed, that, as Paul saith, it hath appeared unto all men, even that grace that bringeth salvation ;) nay, some will blasphemously presume to say, it is a spirit of delusion, a spirit of error ; and these call the light darkness, and the good evil ; and they one day shall know their blasphemy, and

their words shall become their burden; these are in great darkness and ignorance; yea, thick darkness fills their habitation, even the darkness of Egypt, that may be felt; and it is hard for them to be brought into the pure light, and unchangeable truth of God, although with the Lord God Almighty nothing is impossible. These are like the Scribes and Pharisees, who, although they professed God in words, and said they had one Father, even God, sought to shut up the kingdom of Heaven from men, and would neither go in themselves, nor suffer them that were entering to go in. Whoever thou art, and whatever by men thou art accounted of, that doth make a large profession of God, Christ, and the Scriptures of truth in words, and doth hate and speak evil of the light, the true "light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," thou art a hater of God and of Christ, and art of Antichrist against Christ, although thou professest him in words, and sayest thou art saved by him, and justified by him, &c.; yet if thou hatest his light in thy own conscience, which doth check thee for evil doing and prick thee for thy sins in secret, thou art in enmity to him, and condemned by the light, and not justified; and thy confession of Christ in words will not save thee from his righteous condemnation, and thy profession is for the fire, and unto the light thou must come before thou canst find true peace with the Lord God. Yea, whatever thou art who art climbing up in thy imaginations, and soaring aloft with the god of this world, the Prince of the power of the air, above the light, thou must come down; come

down to that which appears a small thing in thy eye, even to that which thou countest a foolish thing, a weak, a poor thing, not worth thy minding or heeding; but this is it, the foolish thing in thy eye, that is to confound thy wisdom, and turn it into foolishness, that so thou becoming a fool, mayst be made wise in it. This is the weak thing in thy eye, which is to confound thy strength, and make thee weak, that thou mayst be strong in it; and the poor thing in thy eye, which is to rob thee of all thy riches, that thou, becoming poor, in it mayst be made rich. For where is the wise, the Rabbi, the scribe, the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for the world by wisdom knows not God; and so the boaster is excluded, that God may have the glory, and all flesh be abased and silent before Him; for He is worthy of all glory and praise for ever! So heed not, dear people, (you who have any desire in you after the Lord,) what this man or the other saith [against] the light; but love the light, and take heed unto it; for that which judges and condemns sin in you, you need not fear will delude you; but beware of that which leads into sin and evil, that is a spirit of delusion. "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light;" and this will not only make manifest the sin and evil, but as you turn your minds inward unto it, and love and follow it, it will save you from your sins, and redeem your souls unto God; for they who receive his light, his pure grace in them, receive power through it to become the sons of God; for through his grace doth he manifest his

power in them that believe in the light, to the drawing their hearts and minds out of ungodliness and worldly lusts, and teaching them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and thus the free grace of God bringeth salvation to their souls. And so, dear people, as you come to believe in the light, to love and obey the light in your own consciences, you will feel and witness the work of the Lord God in your hearts, the operation of the Word of life, to the casting out of the bondwoman and her son, who is not to inherit; to the binding of the strong man, and casting him out; yea, the old man with his deeds is to be put off; you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and the new man is to be put on, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

So coming to the light, Christ Jesus, you come to the substance, to him in whom the figures, types, and shadows end; and to witness him in you, who fulfils all righteousness; you will be circumcised in him with the circumcision made without hands, by the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, of which the outward circumcision was a figure, and [experience] the baptism of Christ, which is with the Holy Ghost and fire, of which John's baptism with outward water was a true figure. John bare testimony unto Christ, the light of the world, and said, "I must decrease, but he must increase. I indeed baptize you with water, but he (Christ Jesus, who was before me,) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand; and he will throughly purge his floor, and

gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." The day of gathering is come, wherein the Lord God is gathering the dispersed, seeking that which was lost, bringing back that which was driven away, healing that which was sick, and binding up that which was broken, but the strong and the fat he is feeding with judgment. The Lord is gathering people out of the forms and shadows, wherein many have long stuck, and is bringing them to the substance and life itself, out of the many sects and divers ways, into the one way of life, light, peace, truth, and righteousness; and by the one Spirit is baptizing them who believe in the light, into the one body, wherein the unity, the oneness, and the fellowship is witnessed; blessed be his name. The way of the Lord is pure, righteous, and unchangeable; "I am the way, the truth, and the life," saith Christ, the immortal word. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness." Therefore, dear people, love the light; and "while ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of light," and heirs of an inheritance incorruptible, that will not fade away. There is no obtaining the crown but through the cross, and this you will know, who come to love the light, to learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and to follow him in the strait and narrow way which leads to life. "If any man will come after me," (saith Christ,) "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." If you be

followers of the light, you will know a daily denying of self, a denying of your own wills, your own desires, thoughts, and affections, your own words and works, your own wisdom and righteousness; an hourly living in the cross, through which you must come to be crucified to the world, its vanity, pomp, pastime, and pleasures, its sins and iniquities, vain words, works, fashions, customs, inventions, and traditions; so coming to be crucified with Christ unto the world, and to be baptized into death with him, you will live with him unto God, in the life of righteousness; and in him then you will find that rest, satisfaction, joy, comfort, and peace, which no man can give unto you.

So, dear people, who are seeking the Lord, and desiring to find peace and comfort to your souls, this I leave with you—flee not from that which judges you in your own hearts, for sin and evil, which brings sorrow upon you, and wounds you in secret because of transgression. How many are there who, when they have been judged by God's pure light in their hearts, have run unto vain helps, even to those who could not speak a word in season to them, but who have daubed them with untempered mortar, and endeavoured to heal their wound deceitfully, by preaching peace to that which is for judgment.

They have thus run from one physician to another, until at last they have said in their hearts, "We will seek no more to man, for vain is the help of man; but we will return unto the Lord God, who hath wounded us, and he will heal us; who hath broken us to pieces, and he will bind

us up ;” and so returning to the light of Christ Jesus in their own hearts, (by which the Lord had wounded them for sin,) and waiting therein, in patience, upon the Lord, in the way of his righteous judgments, which were set up in their hearts, they came to feel, through believing in and loving the light, the cause of their sorrow and wounds taken away by the blood of Jesus, which is his life, and which has cleansed them from their sins ; and so the very cause of their wound being taken away, and the corruption purged out, then He who in mercy towards them had wounded them, healed them with the oil of joy, peace, and gladness : and now those that were mourners do rejoice ; beauty is given them for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and they are become trees of righteousness, the Lord’s own planting, bringing forth fruit to his glory and praise. These can say, “ Good it is to wait upon the Lord in the way of his judgments. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him : come, let us rejoice in his salvation wherewith he hath saved us ; he hath redeemed us out of the horrible pit ; out of the miry clay hath he brought us, and set our feet upon a rock, and doth establish our goings. He filleth our souls with the fatness of his house, and causeth us to drink of the river of his pleasure. Oh ! what shall we render unto the Lord our God for his benefits ? Let us take the cup of his salvation, and drink thereof abundantly ; and in the strength of its virtue, in the meekness of our hearts, and in the lowliness and contritedness of our souls, praise the name of the Lord our God,

who is worthy of all glory and praise for ever and for evermore.”

P. S. A few words more unto you, dear people, who desire the love and peace of God more than the glory and pleasures of the world. Take heed unto that which discovers unto you what your thoughts are, whether they be good or evil; for it is that which must redeem your minds unto God; wait to know it to be a stay to your minds, a stop to your thoughts, and a bridle to your tongues; raising a holy fear in your hearts of offending the God of righteousness in thought, word, and deed. Dear people, retire inward, to the manifestation of the Spirit of God in your own hearts, and wait in it to know the Lord God to be your teacher; so that if you should be separated from those that have been your teachers, and put into a hole, a dungeon, or cave of the earth for your consciences towards God, and be separated from all your outward teaching, you may then feel and witness the Lord to teach and instruct you, to counsel and direct you, to comfort and refresh you, even by his pure eternal Spirit in you; for all the children of the Lord shall be taught of him, and established in righteousness; and great shall be their peace in the God of their salvation; unto whom be honour, praise, and glory in the highest, for ever and evermore, for he is worthy, worthy, worthy, saith my soul. Amen.

WILLIAM BENNET.

TO THE SUFFERING LAMBS OF THE LORD'S
FLOCK IN PRISON.

DEAR, suffering, tribulated lambs of my Maker, the tender unfeigned salutation of my soul reacheth unto you, in the love of the unchangeable truth, whereof God hath made us partakers, of which he hath made us witnesses, and for which he hath (through his love, his constraining, overcoming, powerful love) made us willing to part with and be separated from our dearest friends and nearest relations, and to endure whatever sufferings he shall permit to be inflicted upon us, rather than for any by-ends and self-interest, to do that thing willingly which we know would cause his truth to suffer, his holy name to be dishonoured, his holy Spirit to be grieved, and our consciences to be defiled. Ah, in this frame of spirit, and freely given-up state, the Lord keep us by his power, for his own name's sake, even unto the end, until our testimony for him, which he, in his beloved Son, hath counted us worthy to bear, in this his day, be finished, to the praise, glory, and renown of his holy powerful name, and to the everlasting joy and peace of our immortal souls. Amen. My soul fervently desires that the holy, living presence of my God may be in, with, and amongst you all, to your joy and comfort; that his power may uphold you, and keep up your heads above all your sufferings and trials, that so none may faint or grow weary, but that you may be made strong in the Lord, and be able, in the power of his might, to resist and beat down all carnal reasonings, and fleshly consultings, that your enemy

would infuse into your minds; which, if entertained, how soon may they, who are strong, thereby become weak, and they who witness freedom be brought again into bondage, and be again caught in the serpent's snares; for he is exceedingly busy within, as well as without, seeking daily whom he may devour and betray. Dear lambs, you are in measure acquainted with his subtlety; yea, blessed be the Lord, who hath opened your eyes to see him, his temptations and crafty allurements; and not only so, but you know how to resist them, and overcome him and his temptations, through the strength of the Lord, who hath called and redeemed you from under his power. Notwithstanding, my dear friends, let me say unto you, in the brotherly love and tenderness of my soul, watch and keep close unto the Lord in your own hearts, that unto him you may be kept faithful, to the very end. He will make way for your deliverance, and plead your righteous cause with his and your adversaries, in his own time and season, to your joy and their sorrow. Wherefore wholly commit your cause unto the Lord your God, who watcheth over you and careth for you, and will never leave you; but will stand by, and help you in the needful time, even all you whose trust and hope is in him alone. Dear lambs, in the pure patience and long-suffering of our Captain, Leader, and Example, that meek One who saith, "Love enemies," possess your souls;—and rest in stillness and peace, in quietness and contentedness, in the ark of safety, which the Lord hath prepared for his family, to bear them up above the floods, until the waters

abate and the dry land appear. So the Lord be with you all, and bind you together in his innocent love, which thinketh no evil, therein to serve him with your whole hearts, and one another with all self-denial; not striving, except to be meekest and lowest in mind, that so you may all be tenderly affectioned one towards another, forgiving and forbearing one another in love, the strong bearing with the infirmities of the weak; that, even as dear children of one Father, you may dwell together in peace, and in pure unity in the spirit of holiness; that a joy and comfort you may be to each other in the Lord; upon whom, dear lambs, wait together very diligently, that of his fulness you may all receive; for he is ready bountifully to minister to all who wait upon him, that which he seeth is meet for them, even to their daily nourishment, joy, comfort, and refreshment.

So, in the everlasting love of the tender God of compassion, doth my soul dearly salute you all, who love the Lord uprightly, and who make mention of his name in sincerity and truth, and are willing to suffer for the same, whether you be in bonds or out of bonds.

From your friend and companion in the patience and long-suffering of the Lamb, who hath, must, and shall have the victory over all his enemies, to triumph and reign in dominion eternally.

WILLIAM BENNET.

Norwich Castle,
29th of 7th mo. 1664.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND UNDER SUFFERING.

DEAR FRIEND,

IN that which is eternal and unchangeable, doth the salutation of my soul extend towards thee. [I am] in some measure sensible of the many troubles and crosses which thou hast been under, and art now exercised with; and truly, dear heart, my soul desireth that the Lord may enable thee to wade through them all, in the pure patience and true contentedness; and that thou mayst find the arm of his mighty power, beating down and keeping under that part, which would complain and murmur against Him; which would fret itself because the wicked flourish, and the proud lord it over the meek of the earth. I say, needful it is to know that part, which would fret itself because of these things, chained down by the lowly, lamb-like Spirit of [the Son of] God. This Spirit keeps in coolness, gentleness, and patience; enables to love enemies; makes willing to leave all to the Lord, and gives dominion over that spirit, which in haste, yet, as it thinks, in a zeal for God, cries for fire to come down from heaven, to devour those who are instruments of cruelty and oppression. Unto the Lord, dear heart, let us commit our cause; and sure I am, he will plead it, in his own time, to our joy and comfort in the end. Meanwhile, the Lord keep us in contentedness, and in dominion over that spirit which counteth the Lord slack concerning his promise; for indeed, "He is not slack, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward; not willing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance." My dear Friend, my soul fervently desires, that thou and I, with the rest of our heavenly Father's family, may be kept close unto the measure of the free grace and love of God in our own hearts; that by it we may be continually preserved in the lowly fear and pure awe of Him. Herein let us watch carefully over our thoughts, words, and works, lest in haste we should speak or do any thing that may grieve the holy seed, wound the just one in ourselves, and bring a burden upon our own souls.

Wherefore, dear heart, I cannot but desire, that I, with thee, and all who love righteousness, may be kept watchful in the lowly fear, close unto the grace that keeps humble, and in the fewness of words; that so in sweet stillness and peace we may possess our souls, and enjoy the incomes of the love [of God,] the pure refreshing streams of the fountain of life, according to our measures; and that, even in the midst of our trials and sufferings, our hearts may be made glad in the Lord, and our souls may rejoice in him over all the rage and cruelty of the wicked.

So, dear heart, I leave thee unto the Lord, in whom my love is to thee; my soul sympathizes with thee in thy trials and sufferings, and desires the Lord may bear thee up above them all, in the bosom of his love and patience; [may He] minister daily unto thee, what He knoweth is meet for thee, and so keep thee in contentedness with his heavenly will, [as] that thou mayst say with thy whole heart, Lord, not my will, but thine be done.

In that love which drew me forth to write these lines unto thee, I remain thy dear friend in the truth.

1665.

WILLIAM BENNET.

SOME PRISON MEDITATIONS OF AN HUMBLE HEART.

OH, my soul, be not unmindful of the large mercy and goodness of the Lord, showed towards thee. Let the sense of what thy compassionate God hath done for thee, be continually fresh in and upon thee; for he hath freely done that for thee which none besides him, the Mighty One, could do. He hath brought thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the mire and clay, hath set thy feet upon a rock which can never be moved, and thereon establisheth thy goings; praises, living praises, be rendered to the Lord thy God for ever and for evermore. Remember, oh, my soul, thou wast once like a poor silly sheep without a shepherd, wandering upon the barren mountains, the dry heaths in the wilderness and solitary places, full of trouble and perplexity, not knowing the way to the fold of rest, oftentimes mourning and weeping alone, as a dove without her mate; and no eye saw thy sorrow but the Lord alone. When thou didst eat thy bread with weeping, and mingled thy drink with tears, he the compassionate One, heard thy secret cries, and knew thy desires; thy sighing and groaning entered into his ears; [He] was moved with pity towards thee, delivered thee out of distress, freely reached forth his arm, brought thee out of the

wilderness, and set thy feet in the way which hath led thee to the fold of rest. Now, oh, my soul, he is become thy Shepherd ; he oftentimes feedeth thee, causeth thee to lie down in green pastures, leadeth thee by the still waters, even Shiloh's brook, which runs softly ; spreadeth thy table in the sight of thine enemies, anointeth thine head with the oil of gladness, causeth thy cup to overflow with new wine, and hath brought thee to sit under thy own vine and fig-tree, [where] none shall make thee afraid. The goodness and mercy of the Lord is unutterable, unfathomable, and incomprehensible ! Oh, the height, the depth, the length, and breadth of his love ! When thou meditatest thereon, oh, my soul, and considerest his loving kindness towards thee, how can the sense thereof but pitch thee even upon a stand of admiration. Surely, when thou lookest back into his works, and considerest how much he hath wrought in thee, thou canst see no end of his praises ; living praises to the holy righteous Lord God, be ascribed by thee, oh, my soul, for ever and for evermore. As thou art kept in the fresh sense and remembrance of the great mercy and unspeakable compassion which the Lord thy God daily manifests unto thee, how canst thou but abound in love, in pity, in tenderness, and compassion towards all people ; but especially towards those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, after everlasting rest and happiness. When joy hath come into [thee,] oh, my soul, as a river, and gladness as a mighty stream, refreshings as showers in the spring, and consolation as dew upon the tender plants ; when thou

couldst shout praises and hallelujahs to thy God, even then thou rememberedst the poor and needy, and thoughtst thou heardst his cry sounding in thy ears, "Oh, whose condition is like mine? Is there any so poor, so weak, so foolish, so desolate as I? Oh, my leanness, my leanness! how long shall it be thus with me? How long shall my beloved be hid from me, as in the clefts of the rocks, and as in the secret places of the stairs? When shall I have a full enjoyment of him? Where shall I find one who is sensible of my condition, that can sympathize with me, and that can speak a word in season unto my poor soul! Oh, is it thus with any as it is with me?" Yes, yes, I believe there are many who have been, and now are in thy condition. For though I am indeed but a child, yet truly I am in some measure sensible of thy condition, and can read it by my own; and willingly would I help thee according to my ability. Oh, methinks I would be a help to all who stand in need of help, but especially unto thee, thou poor soul. What! art thou poor? So am I. Dost thou eat thy bread weeping, and mingle thy drink with thy tears? It is so with me when I want the enjoyment of him whom my soul loveth. Sometimes my beloved seems to be withdrawn; oh, then sorrows take hold on me, mourning covereth me as a garment, and none seeth my tears but the Lord; they are my meat and drink, whilst my enemy saith unto me, "Where is thy God? Dost thou think he will ever appear again unto thee? Why dost thou hunger, thirst, cry and pant after him? Alas! it is in vain for thee to wait for him.

Once indeed thou hadst the enjoyment of him ; once thou wentest with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that keep holyday ; but thou must not look for such a day again." Thus the adversary of my soul endeavoureth to add sorrow to my sorrow, and to increase the weight of my burden, that so I might sink and never rise. But the Lord my God is near to help me, even in the time when I can scarcely perceive him ; and when I am (as Peter was) ready to sink, then his invisible arm of mercy is ready to save me ; and a secret hope he preserveth alive in me, that he will appear again to my joy. Hereby some encouragement I feel stirring in me, to wait upon the Lord patiently, and to trust in him, though I do not see him. Surely, oh, my soul, he will appear again to thy joy, for thou canst not be satisfied without his presence ; the Lord seeing it is so with thee, that thou desirest his presence more than all other things, surely will not cast thee off for ever, but will appear again to thy joy. [Then] why art thou so much cast down, oh, my soul, and why art thou thus disquieted within me ? Oh, hope thou in thy God, for thou shalt yet praise him ; the Lord will yet command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night season his song shall be with thee, even praises to the God of thy life. Oh, wait patiently upon the Lord ; his compassions fail not towards those who love him. He will send forth his light and his truth into thee again : it shall bring thee to his holy hill, and to his tabernacle ; then shalt thou go to the altar of God, unto God thy exceeding joy.

It is good for thee both to hope and quietly wait upon the Lord; for "the Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." Oh, wait patiently upon him, even as the husbandman, who soweth his seed in the earth, hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. He who is to come will come, and will not tarry, and his reward will be with him, even fulness of joy, comfort, peace, rest, and sweet satisfaction. Surely the Lord will never leave thee, if thou forsake not him. He may indeed seem to hide his face from thee for a time: but without doubt he will appear again to thy comfort. Oh, my soul, the Lord often heareth thee saying in secret, what is the glory of the world to me? What are the favours, friendship, and estimation of the world to me? What are the vanities and pleasures of the sons and daughters of men to me? Surely all these things are but as dross and dung to me, in comparison of the Lord my God, the fountain of everlasting joy and pleasure. Oh, if I enjoy him fully, I have enough; he is the joy of my heart, the rejoicing of my spirit, the strength of my reins, the girdle of my loins; wherefore how can I live without him? Oh, my soul, the Lord intends good unto thee by all his dealings with thee. If he hide his face from thee for a season, it is to let thee see how poor, weak, foolish, dry, and unfruitful thou art without him; that so thou being made to feel thy own weakness and inability, mayst be the more sensible of the need of his supporting power and saving grace, and rely the more upon him. [Thus] thou learnest to prize the sweet

enjoyment of his presence, to cleave unto him, to be very careful thou dost not grieve him, nor do anything that may cause him to withdraw himself from thee. Oh, my soul, thou must know how to want and how to abound; how to be full, and how to be empty; how to be rich, and how to be poor; and in every condition to be content. The Lord can open, and none can shut; and he can shut and none can open. He can open the windows of heaven, and shower down abundantly upon thee. He can even make a plenty in thy land, cause thy store to abound with corn, and thy fats to overflow with new wine. He can also shut up the windows of heaven for a time, and make a famine in thy land; and thou must not say to him (in a murmuring way,) why dealest thou thus with me? For indeed he may do what he will, and all his doings are just and righteous: in all his dealings with thee, he, thy dear, tender, nursing Father, intends good unto thee. Oh, my soul, when the fountain openeth, and filleth thee with plenty of all things needful for thee, even then, dread and fear thou before the Lord; take heed of being exalted in spirit, and beware of a wrong liberty and false security, which may soon steal upon thee at such a time, if thou do not abide upon the watch, and drink the draughts of joy in the pure fear and trembling. [Therefore] Oh, my soul, whatever thou enjoyest or receivest from the Lord, or doest and sufferest for him, keep low in heart, meek in mind, and contrite in spirit, and then thou art in a safe condition. When thou appearest wise, strong, rich, and full enough, even then thou art in greater

danger than when thou appearest weak, poor, and empty in thy own eyes. Although thou art not then without danger, but hast cause to fear and watch in all conditions. Oh, my soul, when thou appearest weak and poor in thy own eyes, even then take heed of distrust and doubting, but hold fast thy trust in the Lord; let thy confidence in his name be firm; honour him by believing in him, and if he slay thee yet trust thou in him, and never leave him; for, alas! whither shouldst thou go? he hath the words of eternal life, and is worthy to be glorified, magnified, honoured, and praised, feared, served, loved, and obeyed for ever and for evermore.

Oh, my soul, be watchful, that thou dost not in the least degree seek glory, honour, and praise to thyself, and to be had in esteem by others; but wait to feel self wholly baptized into death, and made of no reputation; take heed that thy left hand know not what thy right hand doeth; do nothing to be seen of men, or whereby to be accounted of by others, but in all thou dost, appeal unto Him, who seeth in secret, and He will reward thee openly. Seek thou to be known and manifested only to the pure, unerring witness in all consciences, and to stand justified and approved by it, and that is enough; no honour, glory, nor praise, but to God alone. Oh, strive not for lordship over others, but rather strive to be meek, humble, contrite in spirit, condescending even to the lowest, and serving the meanest in love; seeking peace and unity among the brethren, with all self-denial; bearing with the infirmities of the weak, watching for the good in all,

without respect of persons. Seek thou the glory of God alone, the honour of his name, the exaltation and spreading of his truth. Seek the good of all, yea, of thy greatest enemies and persecutors; desiring the salvation of all people, but not the destruction of any. And, oh, my soul! be circumspect and vigilant to walk as becometh the gospel, that I may be an adorning to the truth of God, a holy example unto all people wherever I come; that the blessing of the Lord my God may be poured down upon me yet more and more, [enabling me] to become fruitful unto him, and an instrument in his hand amongst the sons and daughters of men, to the praise, glory, and honour [of his name.] Oh, my soul, watch and fear before the Lord; keep thy eye unto him, and look not out at others to walk by imitation; but if thou seest any (whatever they be accounted) do those things which the Lord doth not allow thee to do, [let not their example induce thee to do them,] but keep close unto the Lord, and take counsel of him. Do not judge or justify those things which thou hast not a true discerning in, because another judges or justifies them, but rather be passive in such matters; stand still and wait upon the Lord for a perfect understanding in all things.

Oh, my soul, seek not liberty to the flesh; beware of that counted freedom, which is indeed bondage, and which hath stolen upon many in their latter days. Endeavour to put off those things, which in their place are said to be lawful, but which [would if indulged in] hinder thy growth in the eternal [Truth.] And, oh, walk

wisely before all men, giving no offence to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God; knowing there is that which is lawful, but not expedient; there is that which is lawful, but it edifies not. Wherefore forbear what may be forborne, and yet be not brought under the power of any thing below the life; but seek after those things which make for edification, love, peace, and unity; for God is the author of peace, and not of confusion, strife, and debate. Oh, my soul, thou dost greatly desire that I might not appear in the sight of any of the Lord's little ones, to be more than what I really am; by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace, which he hath freely bestowed upon me, hath not been in vain, praises to his name for ever. All flesh is as grass; and what is man? he is but a vessel, wherein God may appear or disappear as he pleaseth; and indeed the Lord is jealous of his glory, and will not give it to another: wherefore, my soul, seek the glory, honour, and praise of God alone, unto whom only it is due for ever and evermore.

If there be some who were once fresh, green, living, and fruitful unto God, upon whom is now come coldness, deadness, and barrenness, and whose love and zeal for the Lord is waxed cold; how canst thou, oh, my soul, but fear before the Lord, lest the same should happen unto thee?

[Therefore] cleave unto him, look up unto the Holy One, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with thee also, O my soul! as thou art kept humble in heart and contrite in spirit, trembling at his word. Look not at thy own weak-

ness and inability, but keep thy eye unto the Lord, trust in his name, rely upon his arm, and hope in his mercy. He maketh the poor rich, the weak strong, the simple wise. Wait thou patiently upon him; look not out at the greatness of others' measures, neither look at the smallness of thy own, lest weariness and discouragement should thereby come upon thee; but be thou contented with thy portion; be faithful unto the Lord; and being faithful in the little, thou shalt be made ruler over much, and enter into the joy of thy Lord. Wait upon Him, who hath freely given thee what thou hast of him, and he can give thee more. Oh, my soul, surely thou hadst never as of thyself, turned unto the Lord, had he not of his own free will turned thee, and "after thou wast turned, thou repentedst, and after thou wast instructed, thou smotest upon thy thigh; yea, thou wast confounded, because thou didst bear the reproach of thy youth." And after the Lord had turned thee in measure to himself, surely thou hadst not followed him in the strait and narrow way, through the cross in the self-denial, had he not drawn thee after him by the cords and woings of his tender love; surely thou hadst turned back again from the Lord, had he not preserved and supported thee by his own Almighty power. His grace hath been sufficient for thee, both in prosperity and adversity, in the time of trial, and in the hour of temptation. So let all flesh be silent in thee, oh, my soul, the boaster for ever excluded, and the Lord alone honoured and praised, his unspeakable love and free grace ad-

mired, and his holy name feared and obeyed. What was I, and what was my father's house? I was neither a prophet, nor a prophet's son. What was I, that the King of Glory should cast his eye upon me, even when I lay as among the pits, that He should hold forth the sceptre unto me, and that I should find favour in his sight? Oh, my soul, the Lord hath done much for thee; he hath made crooked things straight, and laid mountains low before thee; he hath made a way for thee in the wilderness, and a path through many a thicket; "He hath lopped the bough with terror, and the high one of stature hath been hewn down; he did cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon did fall by a mighty one." Oh, how hath his love made thee willing to bow thy neck to the yoke, to take up the cross, to despise the shame, and to follow the Lamb through trials and tribulations! Oh, how hath his love caused me to cast off other lovers! He is become my treasure, and my heart is with Him; so that when I am shut up in prison, if I enjoy him, oh, then days, months, and years may pass over my head, and time is not thought long, nor sufferings hard, because of the enjoyment of the Lord, my treasure; his sweet, refreshing presence, makes a prison delightful to me; praises, pure living praises to my God for ever. He hath been with me in six troubles, and in the seventh he hath not left me; he is my buckler, my strength, my rock, my strong tower, wherefore I will not fear the threats of the wicked, neither regard the cruelty of the ungodly; through the strength of my God I will not fear,

though the earth be removed and carried into the midst of the sea; and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; though the heathen rage, the people imagine vain things, and the rulers take counsel against me. I will not fear what man can do unto me, for the Lord is with me, and I shall not be moved; He will help me, and that right early. I am but a child, weak and feeble, yet having had great experience of the love of my God, and of his tender fatherly care over me, how can I but confidently hope in and depend upon him, and believe that He, the mighty one, will enable me to wade through and endure the trials he is pleased to exercise me withal? He hath [hitherto,] through his love and mercy, caused my trials to work for my good: he hath nine times delivered me out of the hands of unreasonable men, out of their prisons and holes, where through his enabling me, I have suffered for his testimony without murmuring against him; praises unto him for ever. I am willing to wait thy season, oh, my God! for thou art with me. Let me never depart from thee, and then I know thou wilt not leave me; but will help, comfort, and quicken me still; thou wilt feed me with bread from heaven, fresh manna, morning by morning, and give me to drink of the river of thy pleasure daily; thou wilt enable me to stand faithful to thee unto the end of my days, to finish my testimony for thee, thy name and truth, in this thy day, with joy, lay down my head in peace, and repose in thy tender bosom of endless love, with thy dear children for evermore. Oh!

let it be so, thou Holy One ! to thy praise, who art worthy of all glory, honour, and everlasting thanksgiving, for ever and evermore. Amen. Hallelujah.

Oh, my soul, thou dearly lovest the whole flock of God, wherever scattered upon the face of the earth ; thou greatly desirest their prosperity, [even] that the Lord may bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Oh, the Lord God Almighty keep his sheep and lambs, whom he hath gathered out of the waste, howling wilderness, from the barren mountains, [and led them] into the low, green valley, where the pure refreshing springs of life eternal encompass them about ; the Lord keep them still and quiet, minding their feeding, and not at all heeding the raging of the sea, nor regarding the unmerciful waves thereof ; which often [appear] very high, and as if they would overflow the valley, and drown all who flee not to the mountains for safety : but let not the sheep and lambs, the little ones fear, nor flee to the hills for refuge ; for behold, the Holy One of Israel is their Shepherd, and He continually watcheth over them, and greatly careth for them. He it is who hath given bounds to the sea. He can let forth the wind and suffer a storm, and he can make a calm when he pleaseth. Let not Israel fear, for the Lord his God is between him and his enemies, and fights for him against his adversaries ; He will look down upon them in his anger, and trouble their host ; He will take off their chariot wheels, and will blow in his wrath upon them ; He will get himself a name through the destruction of

Zion's enemies, and honour and magnify himself through the deliverance of his chosen, [yea] all nations shall quake before the mighty God of Israel, who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." Oh, let Israel honour his God by believing in him, and depending upon his arm of everlasting strength; and patiently wait upon Him; for he that is to come will come, and will not tarry; his work is before him, and his reward is with him, even joy for the mourners in Zion, beauty for ashes, and freedom from bondage, burdens, and grievous oppressions. The Lord will thunder from heaven upon thy enemies, O Zion, and will break thy adversaries to pieces; He will give strength to thy king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. "He shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth; in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely," then "shall it be said to Jerusalem, fear thou not, and to Zion, let not thine hands be slack; the Lord thy God in the midst of thee, is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, [he will rest in his love,] he will joy over thee with singing." Thy maker, thy husband, (the God of Hosts is his name,) will extend joy and peace as a mighty stream, and endless consolations as a river. For "as one whom his mother comforteth," so will the Lord comfort Jerusalem; in the sense whereof her children shall rejoice, and their spirits shall praise and sing glory unto Him, who is Lord and King of heaven and earth, who is worthy of all glory, praise, and honour, for ever and for evermore. Amen.

O Lord God Almighty, keep all thy people retired in thy name; so that whatever thou sufferest to befall their bodies, their souls may be safely bound up in the bundle of life. Oh! increase the patience of thy people, and strengthen the faith of thy chosen; support the weak, and uphold the little ones, who cannot go alone, that none of thy flock may grow weary; that all thine may stand in the day of trial, and be kept in the hour of temptation; [that they may be] borne up under all sufferings, and in the end come forth as gold seven times refined in the fire, to shine as stars in the firmament of thy power; to declare of thy mighty acts, and sing of thy mercies and wonderful doings; to glorify, magnify, honour, and praise thee, thou Mighty One, who art from all eternity, whose throne is established of old, whose sceptre beareth sway in righteousness, and whose kingdom is everlasting. Glory and Hallelujah to thee in the highest, for ever and for evermore.

TO THOSE WHO ARE NEWLY CONVINCED OF THE
TRUTH.

“ For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” 1 Peter, ii. 25.

“ He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.” Isaiah, xl. 11.

ALL you who are newly convinced of the precious

truth and way of God, and have in measure received truth in the love and belief of it, and who daily give up your hearts to obey the truth, and to walk in the way of righteousness and path of holiness; unto you my heart is open in my heavenly Father's love; and happy and blessed of the Lord are you, if you do not faint, nor grow weary in your minds, nor turn back again, as some have done, but persevere to the end. Oh, dear babes! whom the Lord hath, by his outstretched arm, brought out of Egypt, the land of darkness and house of bondage, and whose faces he hath set towards Canaan, the good land of liberty, light, rest, and peace; travel on, ye weak ones, in the strength of the Lord, and drawings of his light, and look not back to Egypt: remember Lot's wife! Fear not the God of this world, the prince of the power of the airy mind, even that wicked spirit that once had dominion in and over you, and kept you bond-slaves in darkness, to sin and corruption; although he, the enemy of your soul's liberty, peace, and rest, may pursue hard after you, with his whole host of temptations, snares, and allurements, both inward and outward; and although a sea of troubles, straits, difficulties, and sufferings may appear in your way, both within and without; and mountains of fears, doubts, and carnal reasonings on every side; and also something in you may be ready to murmur and say, "Oh, that we had tarried still in Egypt, and not set one step towards Canaan; for the way is so strait, and the path so narrow, the sufferings so hard, and the difficulties and dangers so great and various, that we fear we shall perish

by the way, and not get to our desired rest; therefore let us turn back again before we go any further." Oh, fear not, neither turn back, but stand still from reasoning carnally, and look not at the straits, trials, dangers, sufferings, and losses that may appear before you. Neither look at your own weakness and inability, nor at the strength and temptation of your enemy; but look up, ye little ones, unto the Lord, and trust in the strength of his arm, for he is God all sufficient for you; therefore cast your care upon him, and he will make a way for you through the sea; he will make the crooked straight before you, and the rough smooth; he will throw down the mountains and remove the hills; he will lead you in a way you know not, and in a path which you have never before trodden in; he will make hard things easy to the willing and obedient, who turn not back again to their old lovers, but love truth and righteousness, and follow on to know the Lord. All such he will give to drink of the brook by the way, and feed them with bread from heaven, whereby they shall be refreshed, and their strength be renewed daily; in which strength they shall be able to travel on without fainting, and to run and not be weary, until they come to their desired rest, and see the travail of their souls, and be satisfied with the enjoyment of that for which they have travailed. So the Lord be with you, and keep your eye single unto himself, that your hearts may be full of light; that nothing may cause you to stumble and fall into the snares of the enemy, who hath hindered many that once ran well. Oh, mind and keep to that in your

own hearts, which makes you truly sensible of your particular states and conditions, and in that sense daily, diligently, and patiently wait upon the Lord, for the sweet refreshings from his presence, and for the distillings of his heavenly dew; that so the tender plant of righteousness, and lily of holiness may grow and spring in all your hearts; that the little seed of life may become as a great tree, and every one of you may sit under your own vine, (Christ in you, the hope of glory) where none shall make you afraid.

And, dear friends, look not out at others, but keep at home in the light, the tent; Jacob "shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Esau hunts abroad, grows weary and faint, and then sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. What if some stumble and fall from the truth? let not that shake you: truth is the same still and changeth not: and if you see some turn aside from us, into a self-separation from the body of Friends, and endeavour to draw disciples after them, let not that cause you to stumble and question the certainty of truth; neither be ye drawn away and tossed about like children by them; but keep to the light, and in it follow the footsteps of the flock. Follow not the footsteps of the wandering sheep that have left the flock and are gone astray, who are like to perish by the devouring beast and enemy of their souls, except in time they return to the fold. And if you see some among ourselves setting or keeping up that thing or practice which is out of the comely, decent order of the body, and not consistent with truth's government, let not that be

an occasion of stumbling in your minds ; but be still, keep your eye single to the Lord, and walk as you have them for an example, that are over you in the Lord, who fully follow Christ Jesus ; and as for that which is only set up and held up by man, out of truth's order, it will die and pass away, and truth will outlive all.

So unto the Lord, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, do I commit you ; to be preserved unto himself to the end, for " many are called, but few chosen ;" " he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

A GENERAL SALUTATION OF LOVE TO FRIENDS.

DEARLY beloved Friends everywhere, who are faithful to the Lord and his truth in your several measures and places, who are honest and upright in heart, who love and delight in truth and righteousness, and seek the praise, honour, and glory of God alone, my very dear and unfeigned love in the precious truth extends unto you : grace, mercy, and peace attend you, joy and comfort fill you, and the blessing of the Most High rest upon and remain in and with you day and night. The Lord keep you in the faith of the elect seed, in which is your victory over the world. In [this] stand fast, and keep your dominion in the Lord over the earth and earthly things, that you may sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and use the world as if you used it not, being loose in heart to that which perisheth with the

using. Oh, that all friends who are free from the cares and cumbrances of this world may prize and stand fast in their freedom, and not be forward and hasty in the affectionate part, to run themselves into bondage to those things which profit not, but which hinder Godward, and prove as briars and thorns to the choking the growth of the seed of life in the heart. There is a mind which desires, and is ready, if it be not limited, to create unto itself a freedom that stands not in the liberty of the sons of God. The liberty of the sons of God and children of the light, stands in that which is a yoke to the world's liberty, and their freedom in that which is bondage to the carnal mind, and [which] crucifies unto the world and worldly things. Also there is a mind that seeks to put off, and to keep out of those things, which in their proper place may be said to be lawful, but which hinder a growth in the eternal Truth, and endanger the soul-standing Godward: truly that is the pure mind which serves one master, God alone. I desire, dear friends, that this mind may [be in us] more and more; that we may be as strangers and pilgrims in and to the world, and the love thereof, that the Lord alone may become the object of our love, and that the desire of our souls may be to his name, and to the remembrance of Him.

Oh! dearly beloved friends, much hath the Lord God of power done for us, since the day that he raised us up from the dunghill of our own corruption, and said unto us, who were dead in sins and trespasses, live. Oh, how greatly

hath he blessed and prospered us, and hath even made us a family like a flock, in despite of the spirit that hath so eagerly sought to devour us, and to extinguish us from being a people; and though Balak and Balaam's spirit, the beast, Jezebel, and false prophets, have sought enchantments against us, to curse us, yet the God of blessings has greatly blessed us in our sufferings, tribulations, and afflictions, and has made Joseph like a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall: though the archers of Babylon have shot at him and grievously wounded him, yet his bow (notwithstanding his great affliction) has abode in strength, and the hands of his arms have been made strong by the hand of the mighty God of Jacob, who hath blessed Joseph, and unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills shall he be blessed for evermore.

Oh, dear friends! if any people now in being upon the earth have cause to speak well of the Lord, and to trust in his holy name, we are the people; for mightily hath he wrought for us, though the world sees it not. Oh! how have we been as lambs among lions, and yet not devoured, but wonderfully preserved by the secret power and invisible arm of the Lord our Shepherd! When the beasts of the forest have come forth to devour, and the wolves have been greedy of their prey, then hath the Lord fought for Mount Zion, and defended the hill thereof; and though some said, 'We will pursue, we will overtake them our lust shall be satisfied on them; we will draw our swords, and our hands shall destroy them;' yet how hath the Lord blown in his wrath upon





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