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BRIEF

EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WORKS

OF

ISAAC PENINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA :

PRINTED BY JOSEPH RAKESTRAW.

1830.



PREFACE.



ISAAC PENINGTON, a minister of the Gospel, being fervently engaged that the professors of religion, under various denominations, might not rest contented in the mere idea, and superficial apprehension of a subject so unspeakably important; but coming to a real experience of the operation of the Spirit and power of the word of life in themselves, might have knowledge of the Father through the revelation of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord; that, thus enjoying the substance, ceremonies, types and shadows would much decrease, and a blessed labour prevail for building one another up in the most holy faith; and to this end, his ministry and writings were almost unremittingly directed. His works being collected and published in England soon after his decease, making two large volumes quarto, contain very instructive, edifying matter on different subjects; but having never been edited in this country, and

from their size and cost, not likely to meet the eye of many, the following short extracts, from some parts thereof, have been made with a view to more extensive circulation, in order to promote the benefit, and religious improvement of those, who, from a variety of causes, may be prevented from an opportunity of perusing the valuable treatises as they are originally compiled.

The following brief Memoir of the life of the Author, taken from authentic records, is introduced for the satisfaction of the reader.

HE was the eldest son of Isaac Penington, many years an alderman of London, and, for two years successively, mayor of the city. He was born about the year 1617: his education was suitable to his quality amongst men, having the advantages of the schools and universities of his own country, joined with the conversation of some of the most considerable men of his time. He arrived at manhood, at a period when England was agitated with the tempest of civil commotion, by means of the discord between Charles I. and his Parliament; and as the father of Penington was himself a warm partisan, in a conspicuous station, and intrusted with concerns of considerable importance; the son, had his temper inclined him, might probably soon have risen to eminence in the republic. But he refused the greatness and glory of the world, and chose rather a life dedicated to religion and retirement. Having received impressions of piety very early, they had so good an effect

upon him, that he was preserved from the evils of the age, and became the wonder of his kindred and familiars, for his awful life and frequent retirements; his declining company that might interrupt his meditations, and his being disposed to a life of mourning. Yet this sorrow did not flow from a sense of former vices, for he was inclined to virtue from his childhood; but with Habakkuk, from the dread he had of the majesty of God, and his desire to find a resting place in the great day of trouble. In the midst of which exercises, nothing gave him ease or comfort, but the smiles of God's countenance upon his soul.

About the year 1648, he married Mary, the widow of Sir William Springett, a religious woman; but he continued in a seeking state for some years after; till at length he was convinced of the principles of Truth as professed by the people called Quakers, and joined himself to this society about 1658, being then forty-one years of age. Neither his worldly station, the most considerable of any that had closed with this way, nor the debasement it brought upon his learning and

wisdom, nor yet that reproach and loss which attended his public espousing of it, did deter him from owning and embracing it. Thus parting with all, he received a new stock from heaven, wherein the Lord prospered him; the dew of heaven rested upon his branch and root, and he grew rich and fruitful in heavenly treasure, full of love, patience, and long suffering, and exemplary in his duty to God and men.

As it was given to him to believe in Christ, so he had also to suffer for his sake; his imprisonments were many, and some of them long, which he underwent with great constancy and quietness of mind; first in the year 1661, in Aylesbury gaol, for worshiping God in his own house; and endured great hardship for seventeen weeks, in a cold incommodious room, without a chimney, great part of the time in winter; from which usage his body contracted so great a disorder, that for several weeks after, he was not able to turn himself in his bed. He was imprisoned five times after this, on account of his religious profession; and being of a tender constitution, was in danger of losing his life from the hardship he endured. Thus through

many tribulations did he enter the kingdom, having been long exercised, tried, and approved of the Lord. As his outward man grew in years, his inward man grew in grace, and the knowledge of his Redeemer; for it was observable among them that knew him in his declining time, that when the candle of his natural life burnt dimmer, his soul waxed stronger, and like a replenished lamp, shone with greater lustre; his profession being adorned by a life of piety and virtue, and the constant practice of what he recommended to others. Many were the gifts God honoured him with, which he made use of, to the praise of the great Giver. Being thus fit to live, he was prepared to die, which was in the sixty-third year of his age, in the 8th month, 1679.

[See Testimonies prefixed to his original Works.



This truly experienced man having given some brief sketches of the deep exercises and conflicts which his soul passed under, in his search after, and attainment of the knowledge of the way, the truth, and the life, it may be acceptable and instructive to many, thus to view and ponder his steps, as expressed in his own language.

My heart from my childhood, was pointed towards the Lord, whom I feared, and longed

after, from my tender years ; wherein I felt, that I could not be satisfied with, nor indeed seek after the things of this perishing world, which naturally pass away ; but I desired true sense of, and unity with, that which abideth forever. There was somewhat indeed, then still within me, even the seed of eternity, which leavened and balanced my spirit almost continually ; but I knew it not distinctly, so as to turn to it, and give up to it, entirely and understandingly.

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

his love, of his mercy, and of his grace, which I felt still freely to move towards me; and at seasons when I was most filled with the sense of my own unworthiness, and had least expectations of the manifestation of them.

But I was exceedingly entangled about Election and Reprobation, having drank in that doctrine, according as it was then held forth by the strictest of those that were termed Puritans; and as then seemed to be very manifest and positive, from *Rom. ix. &c.*, fearing lest, notwithstanding all my desires and seekings after the Lord, he might in his decree have passed me by; and I felt it would be bitter to me to bear his wrath, and be separated from his love for evermore: yet if he had so decreed, it would be, and I should, notwithstanding these fair beginnings and hopes, fall away and perish at last. In this great trouble and grief, which was much added to, by not finding the spirit of God so in me, and with me, as I had read and believed the former Christians had it, and in mourning over and grappling with secret corruptions and temptations, I spent many years, and fell into great weakness of body; and,

often casting myself upon my bed, did wring my hands and weep bitterly; begging earnestly of the Lord daily, that I might be pitied by him, and helped against my enemies, and be made conformable to the image of his Son, by his own renewing power. And indeed at last, when my nature was almost spent, and the pit of despair was even closing its mouth upon me, mercy sprang, and deliverance came, and the Lord my God owned me, and sealed his love unto me, and light sprang within me; which made not only the Scriptures, but the very creatures glorious in my eye; so that every thing was sweet and pleasant, and lightsome round about me. But I soon felt that this estate was too high and glorious for me, and I was not able to abide in it, it so overcame my natural spirits. Wherefore, blessing the name of the Lord for his great goodness to me, I prayed unto him to take that from me which I was not able to bear; and to give me such a proportion of his light and presence, as was suitable to my present state, and might fit me for his service. Whereupon this was presently removed from me; yet a savour remained with me, wherein

I had sweetness, and comfort, and refreshment, for a long season.

But my mind did not then know how to turn to, and dwell with that which gave me the savour; nor rightly to read what God did daily write in my heart; which sufficiently manifested itself to be of him, by its living virtue, and pure operation upon me. But I looked upon the Scriptures to be my rule, and so would weigh the inward appearances of God to me, by what was outwardly written; and durst not receive any thing from God immediately, as it sprang from the fountain, but only in that mediate way. Herein did I limit the Holy One of Israel, and exceedingly hurt my own soul, as I afterwards felt, and came to understand. Yet the Lord was tender to me, and condescended exceedingly, opening Scriptures to me freshly every day, teaching and instructing, warming and comforting my heart thereby. And truly, he did help me to pray, and to believe, and to love him and his appearances in any; yea, to love all the sons of men, and all his creatures, with a true love. But that in me, which knew not the appearances of the Lord in my spirit,

but would limit him to words of Scriptures formerly written,—that proceeded yet further, and would be raising a fabrick of knowledge out of the Scriptures, and gathering a perfect rule, as I thought, concerning my heart, my words, my ways, my worship; and according to what I thus drank in, after this manner from the Scriptures, I practised, and with much seriousness of spirit, and prayer to God, fell a helping to build up an independent congregation, wherein the savour of life and the presence of God was fresh with me; as I believe there are some yet alive, of that congregation, can testify.* This was my state, when I was smitten, broken, and distressed by the Lord, confounded in my worship, confounded in my knowledge, stripped of all in one day, which it is hard to utter, and was matter of amazement to all that beheld me.

* In another part of his writings, wherein he alludes to this particular season, he says, "But there was somewhat wanting, and we mistook our way, for whereas we should have pressed forward into the spirit and power, we ran too much outward into the letter and form; and though the Lord in many things helped us, yet therein he was against us, and brought darkness, confusion, and scattering upon us."

I lay open and naked to all that would inquire of me, and strive to search out what might be the cause the Lord should deal so with me. They would at first be jealous that I had sinned, and provoked him so to do; but when they had scanned things thoroughly, and I had opened my heart nakedly to them, I do not remember any one that ever retained that sense concerning me. My soul remembereth the wormwood and gall, the exceeding bitterness of that state, and is still humbled in me, in the remembrance of it before the Lord. Oh! how did I wish, with Job, that I might come before him, and bowingly plead with him; for indeed I had no sense of any guilt upon me, but was sick of love towards him, and as one violently rent from the bosom of his beloved! Oh, how gladly would I have met with death! For I was weary all the day long, and afraid of the night; and weary also of the night season, and afraid of the ensuing day. I remember my grievous and bitter mournings to the Lord. How often did I say, *Oh, Lord why hast thou forsaken me? Why hast thou broken me to pieces? I had no delight but thee. My heart was bent wholly to*

serve thee, and thou hast even fitted me, as appeared to my sense, by many deep exercises and experiences for thy service. Why dost thou make me thus miserable?

Sometimes I would cast mine eye upon a scripture, and my heart would even melt within me. At other times, I would desire to pray to my God as I had formerly done; but I found I knew him not, and I could not tell how to pray, or in any wise to come near him, as I had formerly done. In this condition, I wandered up and down, from mountain to hill, from one sort to another, with a cry in my spirit, *Can ye tell news of my beloved? Where doth he dwell? Where doth he appear?* But their voices were still strange to me; and I would retire sad and oppressed, and bowed down in spirit, from them. For truly I can say, I had not been capable of so much misery as my soul lay in, for many years, had not my love been so deep and true towards the Lord my God, and my desires so great after the sensible enjoyment of his spirit, according to the promise and way of the Gospel. Yet this I can also say, in uprightness of heart, it was not gifts I desired, to appear

and shine before men in; but grace and holiness, and the spirit of the Lord dwelling in me, to act my heart by his grace, and to preserve me in holiness. Now surely, all serious, sober, sensible people, will be ready to inquire how I came satisfyingly to know the Lord at length; or whether I do yet certainly know him, and am yet truly satisfied. Yes, indeed, I am satisfied at my very heart. Truly my heart is united to him whom I longed after, in an everlasting covenant of pure life and peace. Well then, how came this about? will some say. Why thus: the Lord opened my spirit. The Lord gave me the certain and sensible feeling of the pure seed, which had been with me from the beginning. The Lord caused his holy power to fall upon me, and gave me such an inward demonstration and feeling of the seed of life, that I cried out in my spirit, *This is he, this is he, there is not another, there never was another. He was always near me though I knew him not, not so sensibly, not so distinctly, as now he was revealed in me, and to me by the Father. O that I might now be joined to him, and he alone might live in me!* And so, in the wil-

lingness which God had wrought in me, in this day of his power to my soul, I gave up to be instructed, exercised, and led by him, in the waiting for and feeling of his holy seed, that all might be wrought out of me which could not live with the seed, but would be hindering the dwelling and reigning of the seed in me, while it remained and had power. And so I have gone through a sore travail and fight of afflictions and temptations of many kinds; wherein the Lord hath been merciful to me, in helping me, and preserving the spark of life in me, in the midst of many things which had befallen me, whose nature tended to quench and extinguish it. Now, the Lord knows, these things I do not utter in a boasting way; but would rather be speaking of my nothingness, my emptiness, my weakness, my manifold infirmities, which I feel more than ever. The Lord hath broken the man's part in me, and I am a worm and no man before him. I have no strength to do any good or service for him; nay, I cannot watch over or preserve myself. I feel daily, that I keep not alive my own soul; but am weaker before men, yea weaker in my spirit, as in myself,

than ever I have been. But I cannot but utter to the praise of my God, and I feel his arm stretched out for me; and my weakness, which I feel in myself, is not my loss, but advantage before him. And these things I write, as having no end at all therein of my own, but felt it required of me; and so in submission to my God, have I given up to do it, leaving the success and service of it, with him.

Now, thus having met with the true way, and walked with the Lord therein, wherein daily certainly, yea, and full assurance of faith and of understanding is at length obtained, I cannot be silent, true love and pure life stirring in me, and moving me, but am necessitated to testify of it to others; and this is it:—to retire inwardly and wait to feel somewhat of the Lord, somewhat of his holy Spirit and power; discovering and drawing from that which is contrary to him, and into his holy nature and heavenly image. And then, as the mind is joined to this, somewhat is received, some true life, some true light, some true discerning; which the creature not exceeding, but abiding in the measure of, is safe. But it is easy erring

from this, but hard abiding with it, and not going before its leadings. But he that feels life, and begins in life, doth he not begin safely? And he that waits and fears, and goes on no further than his captain goes before him, doth he not proceed safely? Yea, very safely, even till he cometh to be so settled and established in the virtue, demonstration, and power of Truth, as nothing can prevail to shake him. Now, blessed be the Lord, there are many at this day, who can truly and faithfully witness, that they have been brought by the Lord to this state. And thus have we learned of the Lord; to wit, not by the high striving, aspiring mind; but by lying low, and being contented with a little. If but a crumb of bread, (yet if bread,) if but a drop of water, (yet if water,) we have been contented with it, and also thankful to the Lord for it: nor by thoughtfulness, and wise searching, and deep considering with our own wisdom and reason have we obtained it; but in the still, meek, and humble waiting, have we found that brought into the death, which is not to know the mysteries of God's kingdom; and that which is to live, made alive,

and increase in life. Therefore he that would truly know the Lord, let him take heed of his own reason and understanding. I tried this way very far, for I considered most seriously and uprightly. I prayed, I read the Scriptures, I earnestly desired to understand and find out, whether that which this people, called Quakers, testified of, was the only way and truth of God, as they seemed to me but to pretend; but for all this, prejudices multiplied upon me, and strong reasonings against them, which appeared to me as unanswerable. But when the Lord revealed his seed in me, and touched my heart therewith, which administered true life and virtue to me, I presently felt them there, the children of the Most High, and so grown up in his life, power, and holy dominion, (as the inward eye, being opened by the Lord, sees,) as drew forth from me great reverence of heart, and praises to the Lord, who had so appeared among men, in these latter days. And as God draweth, in any respect, oh! give up in faithfulness to him. Despise the shame, take up the cross; for indeed it is a way which is very cross to man, and which his wisdom will exceed-

ingly be ashamed of; but that must be denied and turned from, and the secret, sensible drawings of God's spirit waited for, and given up to. Mind people, he that will come into the new covenant, must come into the obedience of it. The light of life, which God hath hid in the heart, is the covenant; and from this covenant God doth not give knowledge, to satisfy the vast, aspiring, comprehending wisdom of man; but living knowledge, to feed that which is quickened by him; which knowledge is given in the obedience, and is very sweet and precious to the state of him that knows how to feed upon it. Yea, truly, this is of a very excellent, pure, precious nature; and a little of it weighs down that great, vast knowledge, in the comprehending part, which man's spirit and nature so much prizeth and presseth after.

And truly, friends, I witness at this day, a great difference between the sweetness of comprehending the knowledge of things, as expressed in the Scriptures, (this I fed much on formerly,) and tasting the hidden life, the hidden manna in the heart, which is my food now, blessed forever be the Lord, my God

and Saviour. Oh! that others had a true, certain and sensible taste of the life, virtue, and goodness of the Lord, as it is revealed there! Surely it could not but kindle the true hunger, and inflame the true thirst; which can never be satisfied but by the true bread, and by water from the living fountain. This the Lord, in the tenderness of his love, and in the riches of his grace and mercy hath brought us to; and this we earnestly and uprightly desire and endeavour, that others may be brought to also; that they may rightly in the true silence of the flesh, and in the pure stillness of spirit, wait for, and in the Lord's due time, receive that which answers the desire of the awakened mind and soul, and satisfies it with the true, precious substance, forevermore. Amen.

Oh! I have known it to be a bitter thing to follow this wisdom [carnal wisdom] in understanding of Scriptures, in remembering of Scriptures, in remembering of experiences, and in many more inward ways of workings, that many cannot bear to hear. The Lord hath judged me for that, and I have borne the burden and condemnation of that,

which many at this day wear as their crown. And now, what am I at length? A poor worm! Whom can I warn effectually? Whom can I help? Whom can I stop from running into the pit? But though I am nothing, I must speak, for the Lord draweth and moveth me; and how unserviceable soever my pity be, yet my bowels cannot but roll, both towards those that are in misery, and those that are running into misery.

I am a lover of mankind in general, and have been a deep sufferer with and travailer for, all the miserable. None knows the path of my sorrows, or the extent of my bowels, but he that made me. It is not natural, or kindly to me, to upbraid any man with any kind of wickedness, or ever so justly deserved misery; but my bowels work concerning him towards the spring of eternal power and compassions: even as I would be pitied, and represented to the Father of mercies in the like condition. Indeed I have been emptied from vessel to vessel, and tossed with multitudes of storms and tempests; yet the savour of my life remaineth with me to this day, and the Spirit of my God breatheth on my heart:

blessed be his holy name forever! And though I walk with one sort of people, because my heart saith, yea, the Spirit of the eternal God hath witnessed unto me, and shown me in that light which cannot be deceived, that they are the people, whom he hath chosen out of all the gatherings throughout the earth, from the apostacy, to manifest his power in, and his presence among: I say, though I have been guided, and led by the Spirit of the Lord to walk among these; yet I am not bounded there, either in the love, or in the unity of my heart; but I have unity with the integrity and zeal for God which is in others, of what sort or gathering soever; and I have tender bowels for all, even for those which hate and persecute that which is my life, and hath the love of my heart forever. Oh! how have I prayed for the lost world! For all the souls of mankind: how hath my soul bowed in unutterable breathings of spirit before my God, and could not be silenced, until he quieted my spirit in the righteousness and excellency of his will, and bid me leave it to him.

*Of certainty, and rightly grounded assurance
in matters of Religion.*

There is a witness of and from God, in every conscience; which in his light, power, and authority, witnesseth for him, and against that which is contrary to him, as he pleaseth to move upon it, visiting and drawing the hearts of the sons of men by it. From this witness proceeds the true and well grounded religion in the mind towards God; for this witness both testifieth and demonstrateth that there is a God, and also inclineth the mind to desire and seek after the right knowledge and true worship of him. And such who keep to this witness, and wait upon God therein, are taught by it, the true spiritual worship; the true and pure fear of the Most High; the faith which he giveth to his saints; the love which is chaste and unfeigned; the hope which purifieth the mind and anchors it on the eternal rock; the meekness, patience, gentleness, humility, &c. which is not of man's nature, but the gift of God, and the nature of the heavenly Giver.

And then for exercises of religion, as praying to the Father of spirits, hearing the heavenly voice, reading in the spirit, and with

the renewed understanding, singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord, as his life is felt, and the spiritual blessings and treasure received; all these, and whatever else is judged necessary for the soul, are taught by this witness of God in the conscience, as the soul groweth up in the light, spirit, nature, and holy power thereof. But now when the Lord reacheth to his witness in men, and is teaching their hearts by it, then the enemy, the other spirit, whose seat is in the other part, keepeth a noise there to overbear the voice of the witness, and to make men take up a religion in another part, which is shallow, and reacheth not to the depth and weight of truth, which is in the witness of God, and which the witness of God, gives to them that come thither.

Thus, the enemy stirreth up reasonings, imaginations, and consultations, about God, and his worship; wherein he raiseth up the vain, shallow mind, forging and bringing forth somewhat pleasing and suitable to the earthly understanding; taking up the mind therewith, and engaging the heart in some such practices therefrom, as may quiet and satisfy that part in men. For the ways that men take up in

their reasonings and understandings, satisfy their reasonings and understandings; and so they walk in the light of the sparks, and warm themselves by the fire of their own kindling; but all this answers not the witness of God in them, nor will be approved by his light in their own consciences, when it comes again to be revealed and made manifest in them. This was the ground of the error both of the Jews and Gentiles.

Now, from this part in man ariseth all the uncertainty, and doubts, and dissatisfaction about religion. And hence arise the opinions, and judgments, and reasonings, in the minds of men: yea, indeed, the best of men's religion here, is but an opinion or judgment, which the breath of God's Spirit will shake and dissolve every where, sooner or later. All flesh is grass; and all the beauty of men's knowledge, religion, and worship here, will wither like grass. All the buildings and churches that are raised here, how beautiful soever, are but Babylon, built by man's understanding, by man's knowledge, by man's comprehension, by man's wisdom, by man's skill, and indeed in man's will and time; and their standing, beauty, strength and glory, is but

from man, and in man's day, and will fade away like a flower. But the true certainty is in the day of God, from the light of his Spirit shining into man's spirit, from God's inward, reaching to his heart by his power, and testifying his truth there. And this, all the powers of darkness cannot prevail against in itself; no, nor against that man that is kept to it. For it is the rock, the only rock upon which the whole church is built, and which cannot fail to preserve every member of the church which is built upon it.



Extracts from a Piece entitled, "Some directions to the panting soul."

"Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In the Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation," is the soul's rest. It is the doctrine of the kingdom, wherein is life, joy, peace, and everlasting rest to the soul in God. Christ hath plainly pointed out the path of his rest to every weary, panting soul, which he that walketh in, cannot miss of. He hath made the way plain in the gospel,

so plain, that the way-faring man, though a fool, yet keeping to the light of the gospel, cannot err therein, or miss of the blessed rest thereof. How is it? Why, "come unto me; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." He that walketh in this path, cannot miss of it: the rest is at the end of it, nay, the rest is in it: "he that believeth, entereth into the rest." The true faith, the faith which stands in the power, and which is given to the birth which is born from above, is the substance of the rest hoped for, and there is a true taste and some enjoyment of it given to him that truly believeth.

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

gently: the yoke is not one thing, and the liberty another; but one and the same. The power of God, the life everlasting, the pure light, the divine nature, is a yoke to the transgressing nature; but it is the ease, the pleasure, the rest, the peace, the joy, the natural centre of that which is born of God.

Ah! do not imagine and talk away the rest and salvation of thy soul. The gospel-state is a state of substance, a state of enjoying the life, a state of feeling the presence and power of the Lord in his pure Holy Spirit, a state of binding up, a state of healing, a state of knowing the Lord, and walking with him in the light of his own Spirit. It begins in a sweet, powerful touch of life; and there is a growth in the life, in the power, in the divine virtue, in the rest, peace, and satisfaction of the soul in God, to be administered and waited for daily. Now art thou here, in the living power, in the divine life, joined to the spring of life, drawing water of life out of the well of life with joy? Or art thou dry, dead, barren, sapless, or at best but unsatisfiedly mourning after what thou wantest.

Well, ye that are dry, dead, barren, as it were without the living God, that know not

the shining of his sun, nor the descending of his dews from on high on his tender plants, nor the care, diligence, and circumspection of the husbandman over his husbandry: Oh! wait for the quickening virtue, for the visitations of the day-spring from on high! that ye may be quickened again to God, that ye may find his life visiting you, his Spirit breathing upon you, that the seed of Jacob may be raised in you, to travel out of this barren state, even out of this land of darkness, and from under the shadow of death, to the land where life lives and flourishes, and daily distributeth plentiful nourishment and refreshment to all its offspring, who are taught to wait for it, and to feed on it in the holy place, out of the sight of the eye of the fleshly wisdom.

“Strait is the gate, narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The way of unbelief is broad, yea, the way of belief is broad also. It is easy for a man so to believe concerning Christ, or in Christ, as his heart may call it, as to miss of the nature of the true faith, and of the sweet and blessed effects which accompany it. It is one thing to mourn after a gospel-state, but another thing to be brought into it by the pow-

er. With my heart I own those that mourn after, and feel the want of God, wherever they are; but this I know certainly, that they can never come to the enjoyment of him, but in that living path which the Scriptures testify of, to be in him who is the life, and which his Spirit is now found manifestly leading into: blessed be his name.

Thou that wouldst enjoy thy beloved, and feel the rest of his gospel, and walk in that path which leads thereto, wait to learn of the Spirit.

1. Know what it is that is to walk in the path of life, and indeed is alone capable of walking therein. It is that which groans, and which mourns; that which is begotten of God in thee. The path of life, is for the seed of life. The true knowledge of the way, with the walking in the way, is reserved for God's child, for God's traveller. Therefore keep in the regeneration, keep in the birth; be no more than God hath made thee. Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know, or to be any thing, and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart; and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in

thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience, that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion. And as thou takest up the cross to thyself, and sufferest that to overspread and become a yoke over thee, thou shalt become renewed, and enjoy life, and everlasting inheritance in that.

Watch against the selfish wisdom, in every step of thy growth, and in every spiritual motion, that *that* come not between thee and thy life; that that deceive thee not with a likeness, a shadow, making it appear more pleasing to the eye than the substance. Every step of thy way it will be laying baits for thee; and it is easy for deceit to enter thee at any time, and for that wisdom to get up in thee under an appearance of spiritual wisdom, unless the Lord tenderly and powerfully preserve thee: and if it prevail, it will lead thee from the path of true wisdom; it will cozen thee with a false faith, instead of the true faith; with false praying instead of the breathings of the true child; with diligence and zeal in thy false way, instead of the true zeal and diligence; yea, it will hurry thee on

in the path of error, shutting that eye in thee, which should see, and hardening thy heart against thy bosom friend.

Let nothing judge in thee, concerning thine own heart, or concerning others, or concerning any way or truth of God, but only the begotten of God in the heart. Let the light in which thou art begotten to God, and which shines upon his begotten, be the only judge in thee, and then thou canst not err in judgment. Be not hasty, be not forward in judgment; keep back to the life, still waiting for the appearance and openings of the life. A few steps, fetched in the life and power of God, are much safer and sweeter than a hasty progress in the hasty, forward spirit.

Indeed this is true religion, to feel God beginning the work, and to wait on him for his carrying it on. The feeling of God's Spirit beginning somewhat in the heart, the heart's waiting on him for more of his Spirit, and walking with him in his Spirit, as he pleaseth to quicken, lead, draw, and strengthen; this is the spiritual and true religion: and there is no duty or ordinance of the gospel out of the Spirit: but it is easy crying up and observing the likeness of any of them out

of the Spirit, into which observance, a strange spirit easily enters; and then that which was of God in the heart, soon withers, and a contrary building is raised, and the state of the heart changed. Oh! wait on the Lord, that he may give you to understand these things; for the apostacy from God is very deep, and most provoking where it is most inward and spiritual.

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

Ans. When God begets life in the heart, there is a savour of it in thy vessel, and a secret, living warmth and virtue, which the heart in some measure feels, whereby it is known. Lie low in the fear of the Most High, that this leaven may grow and increase in thee. This is the leaven of the kingdom; this is it which must change thy heart and nature, and make thy vessel, which perhaps hath been long and much corrupted, fit to receive the treasure of the kingdom. Now while the savour is upon thee, while the virtue of the life is fresh in thee, thou findest some strength

towards God, with some little taste and discerning of the things of his kingdom. Know thy weakness, and go not beyond thy measure; but in what thou hast received, bow before the fulness, worship God in that, and be patient in what he exercises thee withal, waiting for more from him. And when the night comes upon thee, and thou perhaps art at a loss, missing the savour and presence of the life, and not knowing how to come by it again, be patient and still, and thou wilt find breathings after a fresh visitation, and a meek, humble, broken spirit before the Lord. Thou wilt see thou canst do nothing to recover his presence again; nay, thou canst not so much as wait for him, or breathe after him, without his help; but he is nigh to the poor, nigh to the broken, nigh to the distressed, nigh to the helpless. Oh! do not, with thy fleshly cries and roarings, think to awaken thy beloved before his season; but, in the night of distress, feel after somewhat which may quiet and stay thy heart till the next springing of the day. The sun will arise, which will scatter the clouds; and he is near thee, who will give thee to hope that thou shalt yet see God, and find again the quickenings and leadings of his

Spirit. And in the day of his power, thou wilt find strength to walk with him; yea, in the day of thy weakness his grace will be sufficient for thee; and he will nurture thee up in his life by his pure Spirit, causing thee to grow under his shadow; and he will be teaching thee to live, and to speak, and to move, and act from the principle, and within the compass of his light and life eternal. Only be not wise to catch the notion of things into the earthly part, where the moth can corrupt, and where the thief can break through and steal; but know the divine treasury, where all the things of life are treasured up by the Spirit, and handed forth to the living child, with fresh life according to its need of them. And thus thy heart being kept close to God, and thy spiritual senses continually exercised about the things of God, it will be easy to thee to know the Shepherd's voice, and to distinguish the sound of the Spirit in thine own heart. The beginning of life eternal is in a higher principle than man can come at. Man's wisdom and knowledge of the things of God, is but brutish before it. As thou comest into that principle, abidest and growest in that principle, thou art beyond man's judg-

ment, and art able to judge man, and fathom his whole course as with a span.

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Extracts from a Treatise, "Concerning the worship of the living God."

As the worship is spiritual, so is the place where it is to be offered. It is to be offered in the spirit; that is the place. Divers living stones, meeting together, every one retiring in spirit into the living name, into the power which begat them, they all meet in one and the same place, in one and the same power, in one and the same fountain of life; and here they bow down to the Father of life, offering up living sacrifices to him, and feeding in the rich pastures of his infinite fulness.

Quest. What is the worship, or what are the sacrifices, which the true worshippers offer up to God in this holy place?

Ans. The gifts of his spirit. These they offer up, and nothing else. The breathings which the Father gives into the heart of the child, they are breathed back unto him, in the same spirit of life; in the living sense, in the quickening power. Nothing of man's wisdom, nothing of man's invention, nothing according to man's will, nothing that would

please the flesh, or seem glorious in its eye, is offered up here; but the exhortations, or directions, or reproofs that spring up in God's light, in God's wisdom, they are given forth in the leadings, and by the guidance of his Spirit, and they reach to the hearts of those, to whom he pleaseth to direct them.

The seasons of the true worship stand in the will of God. They are gifts, and the time of them stands in the will of the giver. Prayer is a gift. A man cannot pray when he will; but he is to watch and to wait, when the Father will kindle in him living breathings towards himself. So the word of God, whether of exhortation or instruction, is a gift, which is to be waited for, and then to be given forth in the life and strength of that Spirit which caused it to spring. Indeed it is an hard matter either to speak the word of the Lord, or to hear aright the word of the Lord. A man may easily speak what he invents, and another may easily hear and judge of such words; but to speak the word of life, requires the tongue of the learned in the language of God's Spirit; and to hear the word of life, requires a quickened ear; and to know the times and seasons of the

Spirit, requires both being begotten of the Spirit, and being acquainted with it.

Our worship is a deep exercise of our spirits before the Lord, which doth not consist in an exercising the natural part or natural mind, either to hear or speak words, or in praying according to what we of ourselves can apprehend or comprehend concerning our needs; but we wait, in silence of the fleshly part, to hear with the new ear what God shall please to speak inwardly in our own hearts, or outwardly through others, who speak with the new tongue, which he unlooseth, and teacheth to speak; and we pray in the Spirit, and with the new understanding, as God pleaseth to quicken, draw forth, and open our hearts towards himself. Thus our minds being gathered into the measure, or gift of grace, which is by Jesus Christ; here we appear before God; and here our God and his Christ is witnessed in the midst of us. This is that gathering in the name, which the promise is to; where we meet together, waiting with one consent on the Father of life, bowing and confessing to him in the name of his Son; and that fleshly part, that fleshly understanding, that fleshly wisdom, that fleshly will, which

will not bow, is chained down and kept under by the power of life, which God stretcheth forth over it, and subdueth it by.



Silent Meetings.

This is a great mystery, hid from the eye of man, who is run from the inward life, into outward observations. He cannot see either that this is required by the Lord of his people, or any edification therein, or benefit thereby; but to the mind that is drawn inward, the thing is plain; and the building up hereby in the life of God, and fellowship one with another therein, is sweetly felt; and precious refreshment from the presence of the Lord received by them, who singly herein wait upon him according to the leadings and requirings of his Holy Spirit.

After the mind is in some measure turned to the Lord, his quickenings felt, his seed beginning to arise and spring up in the heart; then the flesh is to be silent before him, and the soul to wait upon him, and for his further appearings, in that measure of life which is already revealed.

Now in this measure of life, which is of Christ, and in which Christ is, and appears to the soul, there is the power of life and

death; power to kill to the flesh, and power to quicken to God; power to cause the soul to cease from its own workings, and power to work in and for the soul, what God requires, and what is acceptable in his sight. And in this, God is to be waited upon and worshipped continually, both in private and in public, according as his Spirit draws and teaches.

For the Lord requireth of his people, not only to worship him apart, but to meet together to worship him, and they that are taught of him, dare not forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is; but watch against the temptations and snares, which the enemy lays to deceive them therefrom, and to disturb their sense by, that they might not feel the drawings of the Father thereunto.

And this is the manner of their worship. They are to wait upon the Lord, to meet in the silence of flesh, and to watch for the stirrings of his life, and the breaking forth of his power amongst them. And in the breakings forth of that power, they may pray, speak, exhort, rebuke, &c. according as the Spirit teaches, requires, and gives utterance. But if the Spirit do not require to speak, and give

to utter, then every one is to sit still in his place, in his heavenly place I mean, feeling his own measure, feeding thereupon, receiving therefrom, into his spirit, what the Lord giveth. Now in this is edifying, pure edifying, precious edifying; his soul who thus waits, is hereby particularly edified by the Spirit of the Lord at every meeting. And then also there is the life of the whole felt in every vessel that is turned to its measure; insomuch as the warmth of life in each vessel, doth not only warm the particular, but they are like an heap of fresh and living coals, warming one another, insomuch as a great strength, freshness, and vigour of life flows into all. And if any be burthened, tempted, buffeted by Satan, bowed down, overborne, languishing, afflicted, distressed, &c. the estate of such is felt in spirit, and secret cries, or open, as the Lord pleaseth, ascend up to the Lord for them; and they, many times find ease and relief, in a few words spoken, or without words, if it be the season of their help and relief with the Lord.

For absolutely silent meetings, wherein there is a resolution not to speak, we know not; but we wait on the Lord, either to feel

him in words, or in silence of spirit without words, as he pleaseth. And that which we aim at, and are instructed to by the Spirit of the Lord as to silent meetings, is, that the flesh in every one be kept silent, and that there be no building up, but in the Spirit and power of the Lord.

Now there are several states of people: some feel little of the Lord's presence, but feel temptations and thoughts, with many wanderings and roving of mind. These are not yet acquainted with the power, or at least know not its dominion, but rather feel dominion of the evil over the good in them: and this is a sore travailing and mournful state; and meetings to such as these, many times, may seem to themselves rather for the worse than for the better. Yet even these, turning, as much as may be, from such things, and cleaving, or at least in truth of heart desiring to cleave, to that which disliketh or witnesseth against them, have acceptance with the Lord herein; and, continuing to wait in this trouble and distress, keeping close to meetings in fear and subjection to the Lord who requireth it, though with little appearing benefit, do reap an hidden benefit at present, and shall

reap a more clear and manifest benefit afterwards, as the Lord wasteth and weareth out that in them, wherein the darkness hath its strength.

God is to be worshipped in spirit, in his own power and life, and this is at his own disposal. His church is a gathering in the Spirit. If any man speak there, he must speak as the oracle of God, as the vessel out of which God speaks; as the trumpet out of which he gives the sound. Therefore there is to be a waiting in silence, till the Spirit of the Lord move to speak, and also to give words to speak. For, a man is not to speak his own words, or in his own wisdom or time; but the Spirit's words, in the Spirit's wisdom and time, which is when he moves and gives to speak. Yea, the ministry of the spirit and life, is more close and immediate when without words, than when with words, as has been often felt, and is faithfully testified by many witnesses. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, how, and what things God reveals to his children by his spirit, when they wait upon him in his pure fear, and worship and converse with him in spirit; for then the

fountain of the great deep is unsealed, and the everlasting springs surely give up the pure and living water.



PRAYER.

True prayer is the breathing of the child to the Father which begat it, from the sense of its wants, for the supply of those wants. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8. God, by the breath of his Spirit, begets a man out of the spirit and likeness of this world, into his own image and likeness. He that is thus begotten, wants nourishment, wants divine warmth, the breasts of consolation, the clothing of the Spirit, the garment of salvation; wants the bread of life to feed on; wants the water of life to drink; wants strength against the enemy's assaults, wisdom against his snares and temptations; wants the arm of the Deliverer to preserve and carry on the work of redemption daily; wants faith to deny the fleshly wisdom, that so he may trust and feel the virtue of the arm of the Delive-

rer; wants hope, patience, meekness, a clear guidance, an upright heart to follow after the Lord; yea, very many are the daily wants of that which is begotten by the breath of God, in its state of weakness, until it be drawn up into the unity of the body, where the full communion with the life is felt, the heart satisfied, and the wants drowned.

Now the breathing of this child to the Father from the sense of these wants for his supply, that is prayer; nay, though it be but a groan, or sigh, which cannot be uttered, or expressed; yet that is prayer, true prayer, which hath an acceptance with the Lord, and receiveth a gracious answer from him. In watching daily to the Spirit, the child is kept sensible of the will of the Father, and in his light he sees the way wherein he is to walk; he sees also the enemy when he is coming, yea, and the snares he is privily laying, and he feels his own weakness to withstand or escape: and in this sense his heart cries to the Father of spirits for preservation. And thus watching to the Spirit, the life of a Christian is a continual course of prayer: *he prays continually.*

Now as the Father teacheth to pray, so he

giveth desires or words, if he please, according to the present need. Sometimes he gives but ability to sigh or groan; if he gives no more, he accepts that. Sometimes he gives strong breathings and plenty of words to pour out the soul in before the Lord. But if a man should catch those words, and lay them up against another time, and offer them up to God in his own will, this would be but will-worship and abomination. This I have known experimentally, and have felt the wrath of God for it. That is prayer, which comes fresh from the Spirit; and that is a true desire which the Spirit begets; but the affections and sparks of man's kindling please not the Lord, nor do they conduce to the soul's rest, but will end in the bed of sorrow. Now, if the prayer be in words, for there is a praying without words, then it must be in those words which he pleaseth to give, from the sense which he kindleth, and not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, or would choose to use. And indeed in the true religion, and in every exercise of it, man's wisdom is kept out, and nailed to the cross; by which means, the immortal life is raised, and grows in the true disciple.

So mark: prayer is wholly out of the will of the creature, wholly out of the time of the creature, wholly out of the power of the creature; in the Spirit of the Father, who is the fountain of life, and giveth forth breathings of life to his child at his pleasure.

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Concerning the Cross of Christ.

This I have experienced concerning the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; that it is an inward and spiritual thing, producing inward and spiritual effects in the mind; and that this is it, even that which slays the enmity in the mind, and crucifies to the world, and the affections thereof. "God forbid," said the Apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Now mark; that which is contrary to the world, and crucifies to the world, that is the cross. The cross hath this power, and nothing else; and so there is nothing else to glory in. The wisdom of God is contrary, and a foolish thing to the wisdom of man. Yea, the new creature, which springs from God's Holy Spirit, is contrary and death to

the old. Now he that comes hither, out of his own wisdom, out of his own will, out of his own thoughts, out of his own reasonings; and comes to a discerning of God's Spirit, and to the feeling of his begetting of life in his heart, and his stirrings and movings in the life which he hath begotten, and waits here; he is taught to deny himself, and to join to, and take up that by which Christ daily crosseth and subdueth in him that which is contrary to God. It will make truth, life, holiness, righteousness, faith, obedience, meekness, patience, love, separation from sin, communion with the Lord, and all the fruits of the Spirit, as natural to them in the renewed state, as ever sin was in the corrupt state. And in that state they shall be able to say with Paul; who once complained of his captivity, and that he did what he hated; yet after he had known the power of the cross, and was crucified with Christ, he could then do nothing against the truth; yea, then being a conqueror, having overcome the enemies which stood in his way, he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him. The cause of so many complaints and bowings down of the head, and going mourning be-

cause of the prevailings of the enemy, through temptations, sin and corruption, is, because the cross of Christ, which is the power of God, which is his ordinance against the strength of the enemy, is either not known, or not taken up. And this is the reason that many that make a fair shew for a while, yet afterwards come to nothing, but are like untimely figs, or like corn upon the house-tops, which hastily springeth up, but soon withereth, because they either never rightly learn, or keep not to the cross. For that alone hath power from God, to bring down and keep down that which is contrary to him. So that, from under the cross of Christ, there is no witnessing salvation or preservation from the Lord; but out of the limits of the cross, the enemy hath power to recover and bring back under his dominion again. And whoever, in his travels, leaves the cross behind him, does draw back unto perdition, and not travel on, in the living faith, and newness of obedience, towards the salvation of the soul. Most men that have felt any thing of God, cannot but desire his life and power; but most fly the cross, wherein it hath chosen to appear; and so they can never meet with it, but are still

complaining for the want of it: for under the cross the seed grows up and flourishes, and the flesh withers and dies. And as the power of flesh and death wastes, so the power of spirit and life increases.

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REGENERATION.

It is an inward change, by the Spirit and power of the living God, into his own nature. It is a being begotten of his Spirit; born of his Spirit; begotten into, and born of the very nature of his Spirit: "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." John iii. It is not every change of mind which is the right change; but only that, which God, by the very same power wherewith he raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave, makes in the hearts of those whom he visits; who are sensible of, receive, and are subject to his inward life, light and power.

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Concerning making our Calling and Election sure.

How may a man make his calling and election sure? *Ans.* By making the gift of

God sure to him; by making that sure to him wherein his calling and election is. For the choice is of the seed, the holy seed, the inward seed, the seed of God's Spirit, and of the creature as joined to the seed. God would have none to perish; but would have all come to the knowledge of Christ, the truth, who is the seed, in whom the election stands: and his holy advice to men is, whom he begins to call and to lead towards the election, "to make their calling and election sure." So that the way of making the calling and election sure is, to make the gift sure, the seed sure, the leaven sure, the pearl sure, which God will never reject, nor any that are found in true union with it, and in the love and obedience of it. Oh! therefore, as God visits with power, with his powerful gift, and as thou receivest power, dominion, and authority over sin, for in this gift is God's dominion and authority revealed, be faithful to the gift, be faithful to the power, give up to the truth in the inward parts, come into it, dwell in it, that thou mayest feel its virtue and delivering nature from every enslaving and embondaging thing; and then stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ the Lord, by the life, vir-

tue, and power of his truth, sets thee free. And so here thou wilt read thy calling, and read thy election day by day; and find them sealed, and sure to thee, in that truth, in that gift, in that heavenly light, in that holy seed, which came from God, and is of him, and which he delights to own, and will never reject.

There is no man perisheth for want of power; for there is power in the free gift which comes upon all. There is power in it to quicken, to give faith, to preserve in the faith, to do all that is to be done in the soul; and it doth all every where, as it findeth place and entertainment in the soul. But man refuseth, man loveth the darkness, hateth the light, shutteth his eyes against it, withdraweth his heart from it, and so beateth back the purpose and counsel of God's love and goodwill towards him.

Had there not been somewhat near every man, which had more power in it than sin had, they might have had some plea before the Lord; but the presence of this, the power of this, the working of this in every heart, more or less, leaves all men without excuse, and clears the free giver and his free gift in

the balance of righteousness. For this gift of his is faithful to every man upon the face of the earth, never consenting to his iniquities and transgressions in any kind, but still testifying against them as the Lord pleaseth to open its mouth. But who hath believed its report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? This visitation of grace is to all mankind, there being none upon earth, whom the Lord doth not thus seek and visit with the light of his eternal life, thus administered through grace. As concerning election itself, observe this; that it is in Christ, and not out of him. For it was the intent of God, to honour his Son, even as his Son honoured him: and this was the honour which God gave him: "That he should be his salvation to the ends of the earth; that whosoever believed on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." That he should be the way for all mankind to come to the Father through faith in him: "that as in Adam all died, so in Christ all might be made alive." "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." But that he hardeneth any, without first giving them a day of mercy, and visita-

tions of mercy, following them with mercy, and forbearing them in mercy; and so by the riches of his goodness, forbearance and long suffering, leading them to repentance, that they might escape his wrath, and the dread of his powerful vengeance, because of sin: I say, that God hardens any before he hath dealt thus with them, from a mere will in himself, because he would destroy the most and far greatest part of men; this the Scriptures nowhere testify to, but abundantly testify against.

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Concerning the Mystery of life, and the Mystery of the fellowship therein.

God is hid from man, as he lies in his sinful and fallen state; and no man can find or know him, but as he pleaseth to reveal himself by his own blessed Spirit. And Christ, being God's image, there is no knowing or confessing him, or right calling him Lord, but in and by the same spirit.—1 Cor. xii. 3. He is not to be known now, but in the same spirit; in his own grace and truth, in a measure of his own life. The dead cannot know him: they only know him, who are his sheep,

who are quickened and made alive by him. And this life is a mystery: none can understand it, but they that partake of it. Can a man that is naturally dead, know what the life of nature means? No more can a man that is spiritually dead, know what the life of the Spirit means. The natural man may get the words that came from life, and cry up them, and speak great words of the fame of wisdom, and of her children; but the thing itself is hid from them all. Oh! it is a strait gate at which the birth, the spiritual life enters, at which none else can enter. The wise and prudent knowers and searchers after the flesh, and of the Scriptures, as they can put meanings upon them, and comprehend them, are shut out in every age; but there is a babe born of naked truth, born of the pure simplicity, admitted by God, while men disdain and despise it.

And the fellowship of the Saints is in the life, and in the light, which is this mystery. The fellowship is not outward, but inward. All they that meet together in the outward place, are not in the fellowship, or worship; but only they that meet together in the inward life and spirit. "They that worship the

Father, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Look, there is the worship, there are the worshippers; they that are in the spirit, in the truth: they that meet in the spirit, in the truth, they meet together in one spiritual place. And so we own no man after the flesh, no man according to the appearance; but in the righteous judgment of the spirit, those only who are of the spirit. Indeed we are tender, where there is the least beginning of the work of God in any heart; yea, where there is but so much as a conviction of the understanding; but men are not presently of us, who own our principle in words or outward appearance, but only such as are inwardly changed thereby in the heart. It is true, persons may walk among us, and afterwards go out from us, who were never of us, as it was in the Apostle's days, that were never in the fellowship of life with us, whom we could never own in the sight of the Lord, as being born of him; though we were willing to wait and watch for their good, that they might come to witness the true birth. Now from such come the offences, even from the falling off of such as were never truly ingrafted, and also from the slips of such, who are

not watchful to that which preserves. And woe is to the world, because of the offences which cannot but come. For they which are to be approved in the sight of the Lord, must not somewhat or other happen to make them manifest? And when they are made manifest, the world's eye is offended, and is apt to think hardly of, and reproach the truth itself, because of them. Blessed is the eye which sees into the mystery, into the life itself, where there is no offence. Truth is one and the same forever.

But if the Lord hath taught a man, opened the same eye in him that he opened in others, and brought him into unity and uniformity with the Church, in the practices which the Lord hath taught it; and he afterwards let in another spirit, and fall from these practices, and judge the very church itself for continuing in them; may not the church testify to this person, that he is erred from his guide, hath lost the light in himself, and so judgeth amiss, both concerning himself, and concerning the church of God? This hath been the state of some who went out from among us formerly, and may also be the state of some who go out from us now. For as there is one

that gathers to the true church; so there is another that endeavours to draw and scatter from it, and then to cause men to turn head against it, as if it were not of God, but apostatized from the Spirit and principle of Truth, which indeed is their own state and condition in God's sight.

The enemy is very subtle and watchful, and there is danger to Israel all along, both in the poverty and in the riches; but the greater danger is in the riches: because then man is apt to forget God, and to lose somewhat of the sense of his dependence, which keeps the soul low and safe in the life; and also to suffer somewhat of exaltation, to creep upon him, which presently in a degree, corrupts and betrays him. *The heart that is in any measure lifted up in itself, so far it is not upright in the Lord.* Let every one feel this, waiting to be preserved, and praying for those who are most beautified by gifts and abilities from the life, because in this respect, and at this time, their danger is greatest. When Israel is poor, low, weak, trembling, seeing no loveliness nor worthiness in himself, but depending upon the mere mercy and tender bowels of the Lord in the free covenant of his love, &c. then is

Israel safe. But when he hath a being given him in the life, and is richly adorned with the ornaments of life, and comes to have the power itself in his hand to make use of, then is he in more danger of being somewhat of himself, and of forgetting him that formed him; being apt to make use of his gifts without such an immediate sense of the Giver, as he had in his trembling and weak estate; and so of departing out of that humble, tender, abased, contrite state, and temper of spirit, wherein he was still preserved.

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Spiritual Unity.

What is Spiritual Unity? *Ans.* The meeting of the same spiritual nature in divers, in one and the same spiritual centre or streams of life. When the spirits or souls of creatures are begotten by one power, into one life, and meet in heart there; so far as they thus meet, there is true unity among them. The doing the same thing, the thinking the same thing, the speaking the same thing; this doth not unite here in this state, in this nature; but only the doing, or thinking, or speaking of it in the same life. Yea, though the doings,

or thoughts, or words be divers; yet if they proceed from the same [divine] principle and nature, there is a true unity felt therein, where the life alone is judge.

How is the unity preserved? *Ans.* Only by abiding in the life; only by keeping to the power, and in the principle, from whence the unity sprang, and in which it stands. Here is a knitting of natures, and a fellowship in the same spiritual centre. Here the divers and different motions of several members in the body, thus coming from the life and spirit of the body, are known to, and owned by, the same life, where it is fresh and sensible. It is not keeping up an outward knowledge or belief concerning things, that unites, nor keeping up an outward conformity in actions; &c. for these may be held and done by another part in man, and in another nature; but it is by keeping and acting in that which did at first unite. In this there is neither matter nor room for division; and he that is within these limits, cannot but be found in the oneness.

How is the unity interrupted? *Ans.* By the interposition of any thing of a different nature or spirit from the life. When any thing of the earthly or sensual part comes between the

soul and the life, this interrupts the soul's unity with the life itself; and it also interrupts its unity with the life in others, and the unity of the life in others with it. Any thing of the man's spirit, of the man's wisdom, of the man's will, not bowed down and brought into subjection, and so not coming forth in and under the authority and guidance of life, in this is somewhat of the nature of division: yea, the very knowledge of truth, and holding it forth by man's wisdom, and in his will, out of the movings and power of life, brings a damp upon the life, and interrupts the unity; for the life in others cannot unite with this in spirit, though it may own the words to be true.

How may unity be recovered, if at any time decaying? *Ans.* In the Lord alone is the recovery of Israel, from any degree of loss in any kind, at any time; who alone can teach to retire into, and to be found in that wherein the unity is and stands, and into which division cannot enter. This is the way of restoring unity to Israel, upon the sense of any want thereof; even every one, through the Lord's help, retiring in his own particular, and furthering the retirings of others to the

principle of life, that every one there, may feel the washing from what hath in any measure corrupted, and the new begetting into the power of life. From this the true and lasting unity will spring amain, to the gladdening of all hearts that know the sweetness of it, and who cannot but naturally and most earnestly desire it. Oh! mark therefore! the way is not by striving to beget into one and the same apprehension concerning things, nor by endeavouring to bring into one and the same practice; but by alluring and drawing into that wherein the unity consists, and which brings it forth in the vessels, which are seasoned therewith, and ordered thereby. And from this, let all wait for the daily new and living knowledge, and for the ordering of their conversations and practices in that light, and drawings thereof, and in that simplicity and integrity of heart, which the spirit of life at present holdeth forth and worketh in them; and the life will be felt and the name of the Lord praised in all the tents of Jacob, and through all the inhabitants of his Israel; and there will be but *one heart, and one soul, and one spirit, and one mind, and one way and power of life*; and what is

already wrought in every heart, the Lord will be acknowledged in, and his name praised; and the Lord's season contentedly waited for his filling up of what is wanting any where.

And unity in the life is the ground of true brotherly love and fellowship. Not that another man walks just as I do; but though he be weaker or stronger, yet he walks by the same principle of light, and is felt in the same spirit of life, which guideth both the weak and the strong, in their several ranks, order, proper way, and place of subjection, to that one Spirit of life and truth, which all are to be subject to. Nay, he that is truly spiritual and strong in the light and Spirit of the Lord, cannot desire that the weak should walk just as he does; but only as they are strengthened, taught, and led thereunto by the same spirit that strengthened, taught, and led him.

Quest. How may I come to the seed; and how may I wait aright to feel and receive the power which raiseth it? *Ans.* Mind that in thee which searcheth the heart, and what it reacheth to, and quickeneth in thee; what it draweth thee from, and what it draweth thee to; how it showeth thee thine own inability to follow, and how it giveth ability when thou

art weary of toiling and labouring of thyself. Oh! this is he whom we waited for! Thus he appeared to us; thus he taught us to turn in, and to turn from the kingdom of darkness within, towards the kingdom of light, which the good Seedsman had sown in us as a grain of mustard seed; which when we found, we knew it to be the pearl of price, and were made willing to *sell all for it*.

O, hungry and thirsting soul after life, after truth, after the Lamb's righteousness, do thou also wait to be taught of the Lord, who thus taught us, and then do thou go and do so likewise, and thou wilt never repent of this purchase, or what thou partest with for it, when once thou comest to enjoy and possess any proportion of it.



*Brief extracts from a few Letters conveying
weighty, edifying counsel.*

It is of the infinite mercy and compassion of the Lord, that his pure love visiteth any of us, and it is by the preservation thereof alone, that we stand. If he leave us at any time, but one moment, what are we? In the truth itself, in the living power and virtue,

there is no offence; but that part which is not perfectly redeemed, hath still matter for the temptation to work upon, and may be taken in the snare. Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall; and, in the bowels of pity, mourn over and wait for the restoring of him that is fallen. That which is so apt to be offended, is the same with that which falls. O, know the weakness of the creature in the withdrawings of the life, and the strength of the enemy in that hour, and the free grace and mercy which alone can preserve.

When the pure springs of life open in the heart, immediately the enemy watcheth his opportunity to get entrance; and many times finds entrance soon after, the soul little fearing or suspecting him, having lately felt such mighty unconquerable strength; and yet how often then doth he get in, and smite the life down to the ground; and what may he not do with the creature, unless the Lord graciously help.

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Friends,

Be not discouraged because of your souls enemies. Are ye troubled with thoughts, fears, doubts, imaginations, reasonings, &c.

yea, do you see yet much in you unsubdued to the power of life? O, do not fear it; do not look at it, so as to be discouraged by it; but look to him; look up to the power which is over all their strength; wait for the descendings of the power upon you; abide in the faith of the Lord's help; and wait in the patience till the Lord arise; and see if his arm do not scatter, what yours could not. So be still before him, and in stillness believe in his name; yea, enter not into the hurryings of the enemy, though they fill the soul; for there is yet somewhat to which they cannot enter; from whence patience, and faith, and hope, will spring up in you, in the midst of all that they can do. So into this sink; in this be hid in the evil hour; and the temptations will pass away, and the tempter's strength be broken, and the arm of the Lord which brake him, revealed; and then ye shall see, that he raised but a sea of trouble in your souls, to sink himself by; and the Lord will throw the horse and his rider, which trampled upon and rode over the just in you, into that sea; and ye shall stand upon the bank, and sing the song of Moses to him that drowned him, and delivered you from him; and in due

season ye shall sing the song of the Lamb also, when his life springs up in you in his pure dominion; triumphing over death, and all that is contrary to God, both within and without.

Now, friends, in a sensible waiting and giving up to the Lord, in the daily exercise, by the daily cross to that in you, which is not of the life, this work will daily go on, and ye will feel from the Lord *that* which will help, relieve, refresh, and satisfy, which neither tongue nor words can utter.

And then, as to what may befall us outwardly, in this confused state of things, shall we nor trust our tender Father, and rest satisfied in his will? Are we not engraven in his heart, and on the palms of his hands, and can he forget us in any thing that he doeth? Yea, shall he not bear up the mind, and be our strength, portion, armour, rock, peace, joy, and full satisfaction, in every condition? For it is not the condition makes miserable, but the want of him in the condition: he is the substance of all, the virtue of all, the life of all, the power of all; he nourisheth, he preserveth, he upholds, with the creatures or without the creatures, as it pleaseth him; and

he that hath him, he that is with him, he that is in him, cannot want. Hath the spirit of this world content in all that it enjoys? No: it is restless, it is unsatisfied. But can tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword, come between the love of the Father to the child, or the child's rest, content and delight in his love? And doth not the love, the peace, the joy, the rest felt, swallow up all the bitterness and sorrow of the outward condition? So let us not look out like the world, or judge or fear according to the appearance of things, after the manner of the world; but sanctify the Lord of hosts in our hearts, and let him be our fear and dread, and he shall be an hiding place unto us in the storms, and in the tempests which are coming thick upon the earth.

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Concerning Love. [Divine Love.]

What shall I say of it, or how shall I in words express its nature! It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through his seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like unto himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfils the Law, it ful-

fils the Gospel; it wraps up all in one, and brings forth all in the oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love doth this in measure; perfect love doth this in fulness. But how can I proceed to speak of it! Oh! that the souls of all that fear and wait on the Lord, might feel its nature fully; and then would they not fail of its sweet overcoming operations, both towards one another, and towards enemies. The great healing, the great conquest, the great salvation is reserved for the full manifestation of the love of God. His judgments, his cuttings, his hewings by the word of his mouth, are but to prepare for, but not to do, the great work of raising up the sweet building of his life; which is to be done in love, and in peace, and by the power thereof. And this my soul waits and cries after, even the full springing up of eternal love in my heart, and in the swallowing of me wholly into it, and the bringing of my soul wholly forth in it, that the life of God, in its own perfect sweetness, may fully run forth through this vessel, and not be at all tintured by the vessel, but perfectly tincture and change the vessel into its own nature; and then shall no

fault be found in my soul before the Lord, but the spotless life be fully enjoyed by me, and become a perfectly pleasant sacrifice to my God. O! how sweet is love! how pleasant is its nature! how takingly doth it behave itself in every condition, upon every occasion, to every person, and about every thing! How tenderly, how readily, doth it help and serve the meanest! How patiently; how meekly, doth it bear all things, either from God or man, how unexpectedly soever they come, or how hard soever they seem! How doth it believe, how doth it hope, how doth it excuse, how doth it cover even that which seemeth not to be excusable, and not fit to be covered! How kind is it even in its interpretations and charges concerning miscarriages! It never overchargeth, it never grates upon the spirit of him whom it reprehends; it never hardens, it never provokes; but carrieth a meltingness and power of conviction with it. This is the nature of God; this, in the vessels capacitated to receive and bring it forth in its glory, the power of enmity is not able to stand against, but falls before, and is overcome by it.

THE END.



Presented by S. L. Mason ill. Coll.

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