

## Selections from “The Diary of John Woolman”

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It has been said that John Woolman was a man ahead of his time, although he would not have agreed with that statement. He was born into an age when the slave trade between Africa and most of the “civilized” world was still flourishing, and into a Church that was not only largely silent on the issue, but participated wholeheartedly in it. In the midst of a culture and an economy that was permeated by this injustice, he brought a challenge to the members of his religious Society, the Quakers. Through his persistent but humble appeals to conscience, his counter-cultural and unique lifestyle, and his extensive travels through the original American Colonies and England, he almost single-handedly brought about the abolition of slavery within the Society of Friends in America. For John, slavery and Christianity could not coexist, and he spent his life convincing others of this. By 1784, only twelve years after his death, slavery had completely ceased to exist among Friends, and the influence of his life and testimony caused the Society to form abolition societies in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

As you read the Journal, you will see that John also had a lot to say about living simply, or “free from superfluities”, as he would have said it. For him, these things were related; one of the primary reasons that slavery persisted was the impact it had on the slave owners’ quality of life and on the economy of the colonies. While many of the specific issues that John dealt with in his day do not directly apply to us, there are some very important principles that can be gleaned from his writings, especially as we look at the exploitation of Third World inhabitants by American companies caused by our obsession with “superfluities”. His manner of discerning God’s will is also extremely interesting, and the reader gets a definite sense of his complete submission to God’s leading. If nothing else, there is much to be learned from his method of gentle but firm persuasion and the way his convictions were lived out instead of only discussed. I would encourage you to find a copy of the full Journal and read it, if you are interested. My hope is that John’s life will inspire you even more to follow your convictions and surrender yourself to the voice of the Shepherd of souls.

As a note, keep in mind that the English that John wrote in is a little different from what we are used to today. The language has been updated as much as possible while preserving the integrity of his writing, but if a word or phrase is not understandable, it might be a good idea to have a dictionary on hand. If all else fails, do your best to figure it out from the context.

## Chapter I (1720-1742)

I HAVE often felt a motion of love to leave some hints in writing of my experience of the goodness of God, and now, in the thirty-sixth year of my age, I begin this work.

I was born in Northampton, in Burlington County, West Jersey, in the year 1720. Before I was seven years old, I began to be acquainted with the operations of Divine love. Through the care of my parents, I was taught to read nearly as soon as I was capable of it; and as I went from school one day, I remember that while my companions were playing by the way, I went forward out of sight, and, sitting down, I read the twenty-second chapter of Revelation: "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, etc." In reading it, my mind was drawn to seek after that pure habitation which I then believed God had prepared for his servants. The place where I sat, and the sweetness that attended my mind, remain fresh in my memory. This, and the like gracious visitations, had such an effect upon me that when boys used ill language it troubled me; and, through the continued mercies of God, I was preserved from that evil.

The pious instructions of my parents were often fresh in my mind, when I happened to be among wicked children, and were of use to me. Having a large family of children, they frequently, on first-days after meeting, set us one after another to read the Holy Scriptures, or some religious books, the rest sitting by without much conversation; I have since often thought it was a good practice. From what I had read and heard, I believed there had been, in past ages, people who walked in uprightness before God in a degree exceeding any that I knew or heard of now living: and the apprehension of there being less steadiness and firmness amongst people in the present age often troubled me while I was a child.

I may here mention a remarkable circumstance that occurred in my childhood. On going to a neighbor's house, I saw on the way a robin sitting on her nest, and as I came near she went off; but having young ones, she flew about, and with many cries expressed her concern for them. I stood and threw stones at her, and one striking her she fell down dead. At first I was pleased with the exploit, but after a few minutes was seized with horror at having, in a sportive way, killed an innocent creature while she was vigilant for her young. I beheld her lying dead, and thought those young ones, for which she was so careful, must now perish for lack of their mother to nourish them. After some painful considerations on the subject, I climbed up the tree, took all the young birds, and killed them, supposing that better than to leave them to fade away and die miserably. In this case, I believed that Scripture proverb was fulfilled, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." I then went on my errand, and for some hours could think of little else but the cruelties I had committed, and was much troubled. Thus He whose tender mercies are over all his works has placed a principle in the human

mind, which incites to exercise goodness towards every living creature; and this being singly attended to, people become tender-hearted and sympathizing; but when frequently and totally rejected, the mind becomes shut up in a contrary disposition.

About the twelfth year of my age, my father being abroad, my mother scolded me for some misconduct, to which I made an undutiful reply. The next first-day, as I was with my father returning from meeting, he told me that he understood I had behaved badly to my mother, and advised me to be more careful in future. I knew myself at fault, and in shame and confusion remained silent. Being thus awakened to a sense of my wickedness, I felt remorse in my mind, and on getting home I retired and prayed to the Lord to forgive me, and I do not remember that I ever afterwards spoke disrespectfully to either of my parents, however foolish in some other things.

Having attained the age of sixteen years, I began to love wanton company and though I was preserved from profane language or scandalous conduct, yet I perceived a plant in me which produced much wild grapes; my merciful Father did not, however, forsake me utterly, but at times, through his grace, I was brought seriously to consider my ways; and the sight of my backslidings affected me with sorrow, yet for want of rightly attending to the reproofs of instruction, vanity was added to vanity, and repentance to repentance. Upon the whole, my mind became more and more alienated from the truth, and I hastened toward destruction. While I meditate on the gulf towards which I traveled, and reflect on my youthful disobedience, for these things I weep.

Advancing in age, the number of my acquaintance increased, and thereby my way grew more difficult. Though I had found comfort in reading the Holy Scriptures and thinking on heavenly things, I was now estranged from them. I knew I was going from the flock of Christ and had no resolution to return, hence serious reflections were uneasy to me, and youthful vanities and diversions were my greatest pleasure. In this road I found many like myself, and we associated in that which is adverse to true friendship.

In this swift race it pleased God to visit me with sickness, so that I doubted of recovery; then did darkness, horror, and amazement with full force seize me, even when my pain and distress of body were very great. I thought it would have been better for me never to have had being, than to see the day which I now saw. I was filled with confusion, and in great affliction, both of mind and body, I lay and despaired. I had not confidence to lift up my cries to God, whom I had thus offended; but in a deep sense of my great folly I was humbled before him. At length that word which is as a fire and a hammer broke and dissolved my rebellious heart; my cries were put up in contrition; and in the multitude of his mercies I found inward relief, and a close engagement that if he was pleased to

restore my health I might walk humbly before him.

After my recovery this exercise remained with me a considerable time, but by degrees giving way to youthful vanities, and associating with wanton young people, I lost ground. The Lord had been very gracious, and spoke peace to me in the time of my distress, and I now most ungratefully turned again to folly; at times I felt sharp reproof, but I did not get low enough to cry for help. I was not so hardy as to commit things scandalous, but to exceed in vanity and to promote mirth was my chief study. Still I retained a love and esteem for pious people, and their company brought an awe upon me. My dear parents several times admonished me in the fear of the Lord, and their admonition entered into my heart and had a good effect for a season; but not getting deep enough to pray rightly, the tempter, when he came, found entrance. Once having spent a part of the day in wantonness, when I went to bed at night there lay in a window near my bed a Bible, which I opened, and first cast my eye on the text, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us." This I knew to be my case, and meeting with so unexpected a reproof I was somewhat affected with it, and went to bed under remorse of conscience, which I soon cast off again.

Thus time passed on; my heart was replenished with mirth and wantonness, while pleasing scenes of vanity were presented to my imagination, till I attained the age of eighteen years, near which time I felt the judgments of God in my soul, like a consuming fire, and looking over my past life the prospect was moving. I was often sad, and longed to be delivered from those vanities; then again my heart was strongly inclined to them, and there was in me a sore conflict. At times I turned to folly, and then again sorrow and confusion took hold of me. In a while I resolved totally to leave off some of my vanities, but there was a secret reserve in my heart of the more refined part of them, and I was not low enough to find true peace. Thus for some months I had great troubles; my will was not subjected, which rendered my labors fruitless. At length, through the merciful continuance of heavenly visitations, I was made to bow down in spirit before the Lord. One evening I had spent some time in reading a pious author, and walking out alone I humbly prayed to the Lord for his help, that I might be delivered from all those vanities which so ensnared me. Thus being brought low, he helped me, and as I learned to bear the cross I felt refreshment to come from his presence, but not keeping in that strength which gave victory I lost ground again, the sense of which greatly affected me. I sought deserts and lonely places, and there with tears did confess my sins to God and humbly craved his help. And I may say with reverence, he was near to me in my troubles, and in those times of humiliation opened my ear to discipline. I was now led to look seriously at the means by which I was drawn from the pure truth, and learned that if I would live such a life as the faithful servants of God lived, I must not go into company as heretofore in my own will, but all the cravings of sense must be governed by a Divine principle. In times of sorrow and abasement these instructions were sealed upon

me, and I felt the power of Christ prevail over selfish desires, so that I was preserved in a good degree of steadiness, and being young, and believing at that time that a single life was best for me, I was strengthened to keep from such company as had often been a snare to me.

I kept steadily to meetings, spent first-day afternoons chiefly in reading the Scriptures and other good books, and was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart does love and reverence God the Creator, and learns to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men, but also toward the brute creatures; that, as the mind was moved by an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, so, by the same principle, it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world; that, as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself. I found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions, but believed that sincere, upright-hearted people, in every society, who truly love God, were accepted of him.

As I lived under the cross, and simply followed the opening of truth, my mind, from day to day, was more enlightened, my former acquaintance were left to judge of me as they would, for I found it safest for me to live in private, and keep these things sealed up in my own breast. While I silently ponder on that change wrought in me, I find no language equal to convey to another a clear idea of it. I looked upon the works of God in this visible creation, and an awfulness covered me. My heart was tender and often contrite, and universal love to my fellow-creatures increased in me. This will be understood by such as have trodden in the same path. Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness. There is a harmony in the sound of that voice to which Divine love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct whose passions are regulated; yet these do not fully show forth that inward life to those who have not felt it; this white stone and new name is only known rightly by those who receive it.

Now, though I had been thus strengthened to bear the cross, I still found myself in great danger, having many weaknesses attending me, and strong temptations to wrestle with; in the feeling whereof I frequently withdrew into private places, and often with tears besought the Lord to help me, and his gracious ear was open to my cry.

All this time I lived with my parents, and wrought on the plantation; and having had schooling pretty well for a planter, I used to continue to educate myself in winter evenings, and other leisure times. Being now in the twenty-first year of my age, with my father's consent I engaged with a man, in much business as a

shopkeeper and baker, to tend shop and keep books. At home I had lived retired; and now having a prospect of being in the way of much company, I felt frequent and fervent cries in my heart to God, the Father of Mercies, that he would preserve me from all taint and corruption; that, in this more public employment, I might serve him, my gracious Redeemer, in that humility and self-denial which I had in a small degree exercised in a more private life.

The man who employed me furnished a shop in Mount Holly, about five miles from my father's house, and six from his own, and there I lived alone and tended his shop. Shortly after my settlement here I was visited by several young people, my former acquaintance, who supposed that vanities would be as agreeable to me now as ever. At these times I cried to the Lord in secret for wisdom and strength; for I felt myself surrounded with difficulties, and had fresh occasion to mourn the follies of times past, in contracting a familiarity with careless and unruly people; and as I had now left my father's house outwardly, I found my Heavenly Father to be merciful to me beyond what I can express.

By day I was much amongst people, and had many trials to go through; but in the evenings I was mostly alone, and I may with thankfulness acknowledge, that in those times the spirit of supplication was often poured upon me; under which I was frequently exercised, and felt my strength renewed.

After a while, my former acquaintance gave over expecting me as one of their company, and I began to be known to some whose conversation was helpful to me. And now, as I had experienced the love of God, through Jesus Christ, to redeem me from many pollutions, and to be a help to me through a sea of conflicts, with which no person was fully acquainted, and as my heart was often enlarged in this heavenly principle, I felt a tender compassion for the youth who remained entangled in snares like those which had entangled me. This love and tenderness increased, and my mind was strongly engaged for the good of my fellow-creatures. I went to meetings in an awful frame of mind, and endeavored to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the true Shepherd. One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks, without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything. I remembered God, and was troubled, and in the depth of my distress he had pity upon me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offence; my mind became calm and quiet, and I was truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies. About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of Divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together,

until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

From an inward purifying, and steadfast abiding under it springs a lively operative desire for the good of others. All the faithful are not called to the public ministry; but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of worship are various; but whenever any are true ministers of Jesus Christ, it is from the operation of his Spirit upon their hearts, first purifying them, and thus giving them a just sense of the conditions of others. This truth was early fixed in my mind, and I was taught to watch the pure opening, and to take heed lest, while I was standing to speak, my own will should get uppermost, and cause me to utter words from worldly wisdom, and depart from the channel of the true gospel ministry...

My employer, having a Negro woman, sold her, and desired me to write a bill of sale, the man being waiting who bought her. The thing was sudden; and though I felt uneasy at the thoughts of writing an instrument of slavery for one of my fellow-creatures, yet I remembered that I was hired by the year, that it was my master who directed me to do it, and that it was an elderly man, a member of our Society, who bought her; so through weakness I gave way, and wrote it; but at the executing of it I was so afflicted in my mind, that I said before my master and the Friend that I believed slave-keeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion. This, in some degree, reduced my uneasiness; yet as often as I reflected seriously upon it I thought I should have been clearer if I had desired to be excused from it, as a thing against my conscience; for such it was. Some time after this a young man of our Society spoke to me to write a conveyance of a slave to him, he having lately taken a Negro into his house. I told him I was not easy to write it; for, though many of our meeting and in other places kept slaves, I still believed the practice was not right, and desired to be excused from the writing. I spoke to him in goodwill; and he told me that keeping slaves was not altogether agreeable to his mind; but that the slave being a gift made to his wife he had accepted her...

## Chapter II (1743-1748)

Having now been several years with my employer, and he doing less in merchandise than before, I was thoughtful about some other way of business, perceiving merchandise to be attended with much care in the way of trading in these parts.

My mind, through the power of truth, was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences, that were not costly, so that a way of life free from much entanglement appeared best for me, though the income might be small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable, but I did not see my way clear

to accept of them, believing they would be attended with more outward care and trouble than was required of me to engage in. I saw that a humble man, with the blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth the desire of wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time that nothing might hinder me from the steadiest attention to the voice of the true Shepherd.

My employer, though now a retailer of goods, was by trade a tailor, and kept a servant-man at that business; and I began to think about learning the trade, expecting that if I should settle I might by this trade and a little retailing of goods get a living in a plain way, without the load of great business. I mentioned it to my employer, and we soon agreed on terms, and when I had leisure from the affairs of merchandise I worked with his man. I believed the hand of Providence pointed out this business for me, and I was taught to be content with it, though I felt at times a disposition that would have sought for something greater; but through the revelation of Jesus Christ I had seen the happiness of humility, and there was an earnest desire in me to enter deeply into it; at times this desire arose to a degree of fervent supplication, in which my soul was so filled with heavenly light and consolation that things were made easy to me which had been otherwise.

After some time my employer's wife died; she was a virtuous woman, and generally beloved of her neighbors. Soon after this he left shop keeping, and we parted. I then wrought at my trade as a tailor; carefully attended meetings for worship and discipline; and found an enlargement of gospel love in my mind, and therein a concern to visit Friends in some of the back settlements of Pennsylvania and Virginia...

Two things were remarkable to me in this journey: first, concerning my entertainment. When I ate, drank, and lodged free-cost with people who lived in ease on the hard labor of their slaves I felt uneasy; and as my mind was inward to the Lord, I found this uneasiness return upon me, at times, through the whole visit. Where the masters bore a good share of the burden, and lived frugally, so that their servants were well provided for, and their labor moderate, I felt more easy; but where they lived in a costly way, and laid heavy burdens on their slaves, my exercise was often great, and I frequently had conversation with them in private concerning it. Secondly, this trade of importing slaves from their native country being much encouraged amongst them, and the white people and their children so generally living without much labor, was frequently the subject of my serious thoughts. I saw in these southern provinces so many vices and corruptions, increased by this trade and this way of life, that it appeared to me as a dark gloominess hanging over the land; and though now many willingly run into it, yet in future the consequence will be grievous to posterity. I express it as

it has appeared to me, not once, nor twice, but as a matter fixed on my mind...

In this journey, I may say in general, we were sometimes in much weakness, and labored under discouragements, and at other times, through the renewed manifestations of Divine love, we had seasons of refreshment wherein the power of truth prevailed. We were taught by renewed experience to labor for an inward stillness; at no time to seek for words, but to live in the spirit of truth, and utter that to the people which truth opened in us. My beloved companion and I belonged both to one meeting, came forth in the ministry near the same time, and were inwardly united in the work. He was about thirteen years older than I, bore the heaviest burden, and was an instrument of the greatest use...

Our work at times was heavy, but through the goodness of the Lord we were often refreshed, and I may say by experience "he is a stronghold in the day of trouble." Though our Society in these parts appeared to me to be in a declining condition, yet I believe the Lord has a people among them who labor to serve him uprightly, but they have many difficulties to encounter...

### Chapter III (1749-1756)

About this time, a person at some distance lying sick, his brother came to me to write his will. I knew he had slaves, and, asking his brother, was told he intended to leave them as slaves to his children. As writing is a profitable trade, and as offending temperate people was disagreeable to my inclination, I was tested in my mind; but as I looked to the Lord, he inclined my heart to his testimony. I told the man that I believed the practice of continuing slavery to this people was not right, and that I had a misgiving in my mind against doing writings of that kind; that though many in our Society kept them as slaves, still I was not easy to be concerned in it, and desired to be excused from going to write the will. I spoke to him in the fear of the Lord, and he made no reply to what I said, but went away; he also had some concerns in the practice, and I thought he was displeased with me. In this case I had fresh confirmation that acting contrary to present outward interest, from a motive of Divine love and concerning truth and righteousness, and thereby incurring the resentments of people, opens the way to a treasure better than silver, and to a friendship exceeding the friendship of men...

Not wishing to do writings relative to keeping slaves has been a means of many small trials to me, in which I have so evidently felt my own will set aside that I think it good to mention a few of them. Tradesmen and retailers of goods, who depend on their business for a living, are naturally inclined to keep the good-will of their customers; nor is it a pleasant thing for young men to be under any necessity to question the judgment or honesty of elderly men, and more especially of such as have a fair reputation. Deep-rooted customs, though wrong, are not easily altered; but it is the duty of all to be firm in that which they certainly know is right for them. A charitable, benevolent man, well acquainted

with a Negro, may, I believe, under some circumstances, keep him in his family as a servant, on no other motives than the Negro's good; but man, as man, does not know what shall happen after him, nor does he have any assurance that his children will attain to that perfection in wisdom and goodness necessary to exercise such power correctly; hence it is clear to me, that I should not be the scribe where wills are drawn in which some children are made masters over others during life.

About this time an ancient man of good esteem in the neighborhood came to my house to get his will written. He had young Negroes, and I asked him privately how he planned to dispose of them. He told me; I then said, "I cannot write thy will without breaking my own peace," and respectfully gave him my reasons for it. He signified that he had a choice that I should have written it, but as I could not, consistently with my conscience, he did not desire it, and so he got it written by some other person. A few years after, there being great alterations in his family, he came again to get me to write his will. His Negroes were yet young, and his son, to whom he intended to give them, had, since he first spoke to me, become a sober young man instead of a libertine, and he supposed that I would have been free on that account to write it. We had much friendly talk on the subject, and then deferred it. A few days after he came again and directed their freedom, and I then wrote his will.

Near the time that the last-mentioned Friend first spoke to me, a neighbor received a bad bruise in his body and sent for me to bleed him, which having done, he desired me to write his will. I took notes, and amongst other things he told me to which of his children he gave his young Negro. I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside read it to him. I then told him in a friendly way that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done, and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. We then had a serious conference on the subject; at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.

Having found drawings in my mind to visit Friends on Long Island, after obtaining a certificate from our Monthly Meeting, I set off 12th of fifth month, 1756...

My mind was deeply engaged in this visit, both in public and private, and at several places where I was, on observing that they had slaves, I found myself under a necessity, in a friendly way, to labor with them on that subject; expressing, as way opened, the inconsistency of that practice with the purity of the Christian religion, and the ill effects of it manifested amongst us.

The latter end of the week their Yearly Meeting began; at which were our friends, John Scarborough, Jane Hoskins, and Susannah Brown, from Pennsylvania. The public meetings were large, and measurably favored with Divine goodness. The exercise of my mind at this meeting was chiefly on account of those who were considered as the foremost rank in the Society; and in a meeting of ministers and elders way opened for me to express in some measure what lay upon me; and when Friends met for transacting the affairs of the church, having sat awhile silent, I felt a weight on my mind, and stood up; and through the gracious regard of our Heavenly Father, strength was given fully to clear myself of a burden which for some days had been increasing upon me.

Through the humbling dispensations of Divine Providence, men are sometimes fitted for his service. The messages of the prophet Jeremiah were so disagreeable to the people, and so contrary to the spirit they lived in, that he became the object of their reproach, and in the weakness of nature he thought of desisting from his prophetic office; but he said, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay." I saw at this time that if I was honest in declaring that which truth opened in me, I could not please all men; and I labored to be content in the way of my duty, however disagreeable to my own inclination...

Until this year, 1756, I continued to retail goods, besides following my trade as a tailor; about which time I grew uneasy on account of my business growing too cumbersome. I had begun with selling trimmings for garments, and from there proceeded to sell cloths and linens; and at length, having got a considerable shop of goods, my trade increased every year, and the way to large business appeared open, but I felt a stop in my mind.

Through the mercies of the Almighty, I had, in a good degree, learned to be content with a plain way of living. I had but a small family; and, on serious consideration, believed truth did not require me to engage much in cumbering affairs. It had been my general practice to buy and sell things really useful. Things that served mostly to please the vain mind in people, I was not easy to trade in; seldom did it; and whenever I did I found it weakened me as a Christian.

The increase of business became my burden; for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed truth required me to live more free from outward cumber; and there was now a strife in my mind between the two. In this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me, and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will. Then I lessened my outward business, and, as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intentions, that they might consider what shop to turn to; and in a while I wholly laid down merchandise, and followed my trade as a tailor by myself, having no apprentice. I also had a

nursery of apple-trees, in which I employed some of my time in hoeing, grafting, trimming, and inoculating. In merchandise it is the custom where I lived to sell chiefly on credit, and poor people often get in debt; when payment is expected, not having the ability to pay, their creditors often sue for it at law. Having frequently observed occurrences of this kind, I found it good for me to advise poor people to take such goods as were most useful, and not costly.

In the time of trading I had an opportunity of seeing that the too liberal use of spirituous liquors and the custom of wearing too costly apparel led some people into great inconveniences; and that these two things appear to be often connected with each other. By not following that use of things which is consistent with universal righteousness, there is an increase of labor, which extends beyond what our Heavenly Father intends for us. And by great labor, and often of much sweating, there is even among people who are not drunkards a craving of liquors to revive the spirits; that partly by the luxurious drinking of some, and partly by the drinking of others (led to it through immoderate labor), very great quantities of rum are every year expended in our colonies; the greater part of which we should have no need of, did we steadily attend to pure wisdom.

When men take pleasure in feeling their minds elevated with strong drink, and so indulge their appetite as to disorder their understandings, neglect their duty as members of a family or civil society, and cast off all regard to religion, their case is much to be pitied. And where those whose lives are for the most part regular, and whose examples have a strong influence on the minds of others, adhere to some customs which powerfully draw to the use of more strong liquor than pure wisdom allows, it hinders the spreading of the spirit of meekness, and strengthens the hands of the more excessive drinkers. This is a case to be lamented.

Every degree of luxury has some connection with evil; and if those who profess to be disciples of Christ, and are looked upon as leaders of the people, have that mind in them which was also in Christ, and so stand separate from every wrong way, it is a means of help to the weaker. As I have sometimes been much spent in the heat and have taken spirits to revive me, I have found by experience, that in such circumstances the mind is not so calm, nor so fitly disposed for Divine meditation, as when all such extremes are avoided. I have felt an increasing care to attend to that Holy Spirit which sets right bounds to our desires, and leads those who faithfully follow it to apply all the gifts of Divine Providence to the purposes for which they were intended. Did those who have the care of great estates attend with singleness of heart to this heavenly Instructor, which so opens and enlarges the mind as to cause men to love their neighbors as themselves, they would have wisdom given them to manage their concerns, without employing some people in providing luxuries of life, or others in laboring too hard; but for want of steadily regarding this principle of Divine love, a selfish spirit takes place in the minds of people, which is attended with darkness and manifold

confusions in the world.

Though trading in things useful is an honest employ, yet through the great number of superfluities which are bought and sold, and through the corruption of the times, they who apply to merchandise for a living have great need to be well experienced in that precept which the Prophet Jeremiah laid down for his scribe: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."

#### Chapter IV (1757-1758)

Soon after I entered this province a deep and painful exercise came upon me, which I often had some feeling of, since my mind was drawn toward these parts, and with which I had acquainted my brother before we agreed to join as companions. As the people in this and the Southern Provinces live much on the labor of slaves, many of whom are abused, my concern was that I might attend with singleness of heart to the voice of the true Shepherd and be so supported as to remain unmoved at the faces of men.

As it is common for Friends on such a visit to have entertainment free of cost, a difficulty arose in my mind with respect to saving my money by kindness received from what appeared to me to be the gain of oppression. Receiving a gift, considered as a gift, brings the receiver under obligations to the benefactor, and has a natural tendency to draw the obliged into a party with the giver. To prevent difficulties of this kind, and to preserve the minds of judges from any bias, was that Divine prohibition: "Thou shalt not receive any gift; for a gift bindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." (Exod. 23:8.) As the disciples were sent forth without any provision for their journey, and our Lord said the workman is worthy of his meat, their labor in the gospel was considered as a reward for their entertainment, and therefore not received as a gift; yet, in regard to my present journey, I could not see my way clear in that respect. The difference appeared thus: the entertainment the disciples met with was from them whose hearts God had opened to receive them, from a love to them and the truth they published; but we, considered as members of the same religious society, look upon it as a piece of civility to receive each other in such visits; and such receptions, at times, is partly in regard to reputation, and not from an inward unity of heart and spirit. Conduct is more convincing than language, and where people, by their actions, manifest that the slave trade is not so disagreeable to their principles but that it may be encouraged, there is not a sound uniting with some Friends who visit them.

The prospect of so weighty a work, and of being so distinguished from many whom I esteemed before myself, brought me very low, and such were the conflicts of my soul that I had a near sympathy with the Prophet, in the time of his weakness, when he said: "If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight." (Num. xi. 15.) But I soon saw that this proceeded

from the lack of a full resignation to the Divine will. Many were the afflictions which attended me, and in great humility, with many tears, my cries were to the Almighty for his gracious and fatherly assistance, and after a time of deep trial I was favored to understand the state mentioned by the Psalmist more clearly than ever I had done before: "My soul is even as a weaned child." (Psalm 131:2.) Being thus helped to sink down into resignation, I felt a deliverance from that tempest in which I had been sorely tried, and in calmness of mind went forward, trusting that the Lord Jesus Christ, as I faithfully attended to him, would be a counselor to me in all difficulties, and that by His strength I should be enabled to leave money with the members of society where I had entertainment, when I found that omitting it would obstruct that work to which I believed He had called me. As I copy this after my return, I may here add, that oftentimes I did so under a sense of duty. The way in which I did it was thus: when I expected soon to leave a Friend's house where I had entertainment, if I believed that I should not keep clear from the gain of oppression without leaving money, I spoke to one of the heads of the family privately, and desired them to accept those pieces of silver, and give them to those of their Negroes they believed would make the best use of them; and at other times I gave them to the Negroes myself, as the way looked clearest to me. Before I came out, I had provided a large number of small pieces for this purpose and thus offering them to some who appeared to be wealthy people was a trial both to me and them. But the fear of the Lord so covered me at times that my way was made easier than I expected; and few, if any, manifested any resentment at the offer, and most of them, after some conversation, accepted of them...

On the 11th, we crossed the rivers Potomac and Rappahannock, and lodged at Port Royal. On the way we had the company of a colonel of the militia, who appeared to be a thoughtful man. I took occasion to remark on the difference in general betwixt a people used to labor moderately for their living, training up their children in frugality and business, and those who live on the labor of slaves; the former, in my view, being the most happy life. He concurred in the remark, and mentioned the trouble arising from the troublesome, idle disposition of the Negroes, adding that one of our laborers would do as much in a day as two of their slaves. I replied that free men, whose minds were properly on their business, found a satisfaction in improving, cultivating, and providing for their families; but Negroes, laboring to support others who claim them as their property, and expecting nothing but slavery during life, had not the same incentive to be industrious.

After some further conversation I said, that men having power too often misapplied it; that though we made slaves of the Negroes, and the Turks made slaves of the Christians, I believed that liberty was the natural right of all men equally. This he did not deny, but said the lives of the Negroes were so wretched in their own country that many of them lived better here than there. I replied,

"There is a great difference in regard to us on what principle we act"; and so the conversation on that subject ended. I may here add that another person, some time afterwards, mentioned the wretchedness of the Negroes, occasioned by their internal wars, as an argument in favor of our fetching them away for slaves. To this I replied, if compassion for the Africans, on account of their domestic troubles, was the real motive of our purchasing them, that spirit of tenderness being attended to would incite us to use them kindly that, as strangers brought out of affliction, their lives might be happy among us. And as they are human creatures, whose souls are as precious as ours, and who may receive the same help and comfort from the Holy Scriptures as we do, we could not omit suitable endeavors to instruct them therein; but that while we manifest by our conduct that our views in purchasing them are to advance ourselves, and while our buying captives taken in war animates those parties to push on the war, and increase desolation amongst them, to say they live unhappily in Africa is far from being an argument in our favor. I further said, the present circumstances of these provinces to me appear difficult; the slaves look like a burdensome stone to such as burden themselves with them; and that if the white people retain a resolution to prefer their outward prospects of gain to all other considerations, and do not act conscientiously toward them as fellow-creatures, I believe that burden will grow heavier and heavier, until times change in a way disagreeable to us. The person appeared very serious, and owned that in considering their condition and the manner of their treatment in these provinces he had sometimes thought it might be just in the Almighty to so order it.

Having traveled through Maryland, we came amongst Friends at Cedar Creek in Virginia, on the 12th; and the next day rode, in company with several of them, a day's journey to Camp Creek. As I was riding along in the morning, my mind was deeply affected in a sense I had of the need of Divine aid to support me in the various difficulties which attended me, and in uncommon distress of mind I cried in secret to the Most High, "O Lord be merciful, I beseech thee, to thy poor afflicted creature!" After some time, I felt inward relief, and, soon after, a Friend in company began to talk in support of the slave-trade, and said the Negroes were understood to be the offspring of Cain, their blackness being the mark which God set upon him after he murdered Abel his brother; that it was the design of Providence they should be slaves, as a condition proper to the race of so wicked a man as Cain was. Then another spoke in support of what had been said. To all this, I replied in substance as follows: that Noah and his family were all who survived the flood, according to Scripture; and as Noah was of Seth's race, the family of Cain was wholly destroyed. One of them said that after the flood Ham went to the land of Nod and took a wife; that Nod was a land far distant, inhabited by Cain's race, and that the flood did not reach it; and as Ham was sentenced to be a servant of servants to his brethren, these two families, being thus joined, were undoubtedly fit only for slaves. I replied, the flood was a judgment upon the world for their abominations, and it was granted that Cain's

stock was the most wicked, and therefore unreasonable to suppose that they were spared. As to Ham's going to the land of Nod for a wife, no time being fixed, Nod might be inhabited by some of Noah's family before Ham married a second time; moreover the text says "That all flesh died that moved upon the earth." (Gen. vii. 21.) I further reminded them how the prophets repeatedly declare "that the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, but every one be answerable for his own sins." I was troubled to perceive the darkness of their imaginations, and in some pressure of spirit said, "The love of ease and gain are the motives in general of keeping slaves, and men are wont to take hold of weak arguments to support a cause which is unreasonable. I have no interest on either side, save only the interest that I desire to have in the truth. I believe liberty is their right, and as I see they are not only deprived of it, but treated in other respects with inhumanity in many places, I believe He who is a refuge for the oppressed will, in his own time, plead their cause, and happy will it be for such as walk in uprightness before him." And thus our conversation ended...

From the time of my entering Maryland I have been much under sorrow, which of late so increased upon me that my mind was almost overwhelmed, and I may say with the Psalmist, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God," who, in infinite goodness, looked upon my affliction, and in my private retirement sent the Comforter for my relief, for which I humbly bless His holy name.

The sense I had of the state of the churches brought a weight of distress upon me. The gold to me appeared dim, and the fine gold changed, and though this is the case too generally, yet the sense of it in these parts has in a particular manner worn heavy upon me. It appeared to me that through the prevailing of the spirit of this world the minds of many were brought to an inward desolation, and instead of the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and heavenly wisdom, which are the necessary companions of the true sheep of Christ, a spirit of fierceness and the love of dominion too generally prevailed. From small beginnings in error great buildings by degrees are raised, and from one age to another are more and more strengthened by the general concurrence of the people; and as men obtain reputation by their profession of the truth, their virtues are mentioned as arguments in favor of general error; and those of less note, to justify themselves, say, such and such good men did the like. By what other steps could the people of Judah arise to that height in wickedness as to give just ground for the Prophet Isaiah to declare, in the name of the Lord, "that none calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth" (Isa. 59:4), or for the Almighty to call upon the great city of Jerusalem just before the Babylonian captivity, "If ye can find a man, if there be any who executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it"? (Jer. 5: 1.)

The prospect of a way being open to the same corruption, in some parts of this

newly settled land of America, in respect to our conduct towards the Negroes, has deeply bowed my mind in this journey, and though briefly to relate how these people are treated is no agreeable work yet, after often reading over the notes I made as I traveled, I find my mind engaged to preserve them. Many of the white people in those provinces take little or no care of Negro marriages; and when Negroes marry after their own way, some make so little account of those marriages that with views of outward interest they often part men from their wives by selling them far asunder, which is common when estates are sold by executors at venue. Many whose labor is heavy being followed at their business in the field by a man with a whip, hired for that purpose, have in common little else allowed but one peck of Indian corn and some salt, for one week, with a few potatoes; the potatoes they commonly raise by their labor on the first day of the week. The correction ensuing on their disobedience to overseers, or slothfulness in business, is often very severe, and sometimes desperate.

Men and women have many times scarcely clothes sufficient to hide their nakedness, and boys and girls ten and twelve years old are often quite naked amongst their master's children. Some of our Society, and some of the society called New Lights, use some endeavors to instruct those they have in reading; but commonly this is not only neglected, but disapproved. These are the people by whose labor the other inhabitants are in a great measure supported, and many of them in the luxuries of life. These are the people who have made no agreement to serve us, and who have not forfeited their liberty that we know of. These are the souls for whom Christ died, and for our conduct towards them we must answer before Him who is no respecter of persons. They who know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and are thus acquainted with the merciful, benevolent, gospel spirit, will therein perceive that the indignation of God is kindled against oppression and cruelty, and in beholding the great distress of so numerous a people will find cause for mourning.

The next meeting we had was at Black-Water, and from thence went to the Yearly Meeting at the Western Branch. When business began, some queries were introduced by some of their members for consideration, and, if approved, they were to be answered hereafter by their respective Monthly Meetings. They were the Pennsylvania queries, which had been examined by a committee of Virginia Yearly Meeting appointed the last year, who made some alterations in them, one of which alterations was made in favor of a custom which troubled me. The query was, "Are there any concerned in the importation of Negroes, or in buying them after imported?" which was thus altered, "Are there any concerned in the importation of Negroes, or buying them to trade in?" As one query admitted with unanimity was, "Are any concerned in buying or vending goods unlawfully imported, or prize goods?" I found my mind engaged to say that as we profess the truth, and were there assembled to support the testimony of it, it was necessary for us to dwell deep and act in that wisdom which is pure, or otherwise

we could not prosper. I then mentioned their alteration, and referring to the last-mentioned query, added, that as purchasing any merchandise taken by the sword was always allowed to be inconsistent with our principles, so Negroes being captives of war, or taken by stealth, it was inconsistent with our testimony to buy them; and their being our fellow-creatures, and sold as slaves, added greatly to the iniquity. Friends appeared attentive to what was said; some expressed a care and concern about their Negroes; none made any objection, by way of reply to what I said, but the query was admitted as they had altered it.

As some of their members have heretofore traded in Negroes, as in other merchandise, this query being admitted will be one step further than they have hitherto gone, and I did not see it my duty to press for an alteration, but felt easy to leave it all to Him who alone is able to turn the hearts of the mighty, and make way for the spreading of truth on the earth, by means agreeable to his infinite wisdom. In regard to those they already had, I felt my mind engaged to labor with them, and said that as we believe the Scriptures were given forth by holy men, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and many of us know by experience that they are often helpful and comfortable, and believe ourselves bound in duty to teach our children to read them; I believed that if we were divested of all selfish views, the same good spirit that gave them forth would engage us to teach the Negroes to read, that they might have the benefit of them. Some present manifested a concern to take more care in the education of their Negroes...

Here my brother joined with some Friends from New Garden who were going homeward; and I went next to Simons Creek Monthly Meeting, where I was silent during the meeting for worship. When business came on, my mind was exercised concerning the poor slaves, but I did not feel my way clear to speak. In this condition I was bowed in spirit before the Lord, and with tears and inward supplication besought him so to open my understanding that I might know his will concerning me; and, at length, my mind was settled in silence. Near the end of their business a member of their meeting expressed a concern that had some time lain upon him, on account of Friends so much neglecting their duty in the education of their slaves, and proposed having meetings sometimes appointed for them on a weekday, to be attended only by some Friends to be named in their Monthly Meetings. Many present appeared to unite with the proposal. One said he had often wondered that they, being our fellow-creatures, and capable of religious understanding, had been so exceedingly neglected; another expressed the like concern, and appeared zealous that in future it might be more closely considered. At length a minute was made, and the further consideration of it referred to their next Monthly Meeting. The Friend who made this proposal has Negroes; he told me that he was at New Garden, about two hundred and fifty miles from home, and came back alone; that in this solitary journey this exercise, in regard to the education of their Negroes, was from time to time renewed in his mind. A Friend of some note in Virginia, who has slaves, told me that he being

far from home on a lonesome journey had many serious thoughts about them; and his mind was so impressed therewith that he believed he saw a time coming when Divine Providence would alter the circumstance of these people, respecting their condition as slaves...

From there I went back into Virginia, and had a meeting near James Cowpland's; it was a time of inward suffering, but through the goodness of the Lord I was made content; at another meeting, through the renewing of pure love, we had a very comfortable season.

Traveling up and down of late, I have had renewed evidences that to be faithful to the Lord, and content with his will concerning me, is a most necessary and useful lesson for me to be learning; looking less at the effects of my labor than at the pure motion and reality of the concern, as it arises from heavenly love. In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; and as the mind, by humble resignation, is united to Him, and we utter words from an inward knowledge that they arise from the heavenly spring, though our way may be difficult, and it may require close attention to keep in it, and though the matter in which we may be led may tend to our own abasement; yet, if we continue in patience and meekness, heavenly peace will be the reward of our labors...

## Chapter V (1757-1758)

A FEW years past, money being made current in our province for carrying on wars, and to be called in again by taxes laid on the inhabitants, my mind was often affected with the thoughts of paying such taxes; and I believe it right for me to preserve a memorandum concerning it. I was told that Friends in England frequently paid taxes, when the money was applied to such purposes. I had conversation with several noted Friends on the subject, who all favored the payment of such taxes; some of them I preferred before myself, and this made me easier for a time; yet there was in the depth of my mind a scruple which I never could get over; and at certain times I was greatly distressed on that account.

I believed that there were some upright-hearted men who paid such taxes, yet could not see that their example was a sufficient reason for me to do so, while I believe that the spirit of truth required of me, as an individual, to suffer patiently the distress of goods, rather than pay actively.

To refuse the active payment of a tax that our Society generally paid was exceedingly disagreeable; but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful. When this exercise came upon me, I knew of none under the like difficulty; and in my distress I besought the Lord to enable me to give up all that so I might follow him wherever he was pleased to lead me. Under this exercise I went to our Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia in the year 1755; at which a committee was appointed of some from each Quarterly Meeting, to correspond

with the meeting for sufferers in London; and another to visit our Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. After their appointment, before the last adjournment of the meeting, it was agreed that these two committees should meet together in Friends' schoolhouse in the city, to consider some things in which the cause of truth was concerned. They accordingly had a weighty conference in the fear of the Lord; at which time I perceived there were many Friends under a scruple like that before mentioned.

As scrupling to pay a tax on account of the application has seldom been heard of before, even among men of integrity, who have steadily borne their testimony against outward wars in their time, I may therefore note some things that have occurred to my mind, as I have been inwardly exercised on that account. From the steady opposition which faithful Friends in early times made to wrong things then approved, they were hated and persecuted by men living in the spirit of this world, and suffering with firmness, they were made a blessing to the church, and the work prospered. It equally concerns men in every age to take heed to their own spirits; and in comparing their situation with ours, to me it appears that there was less danger of their being infected with the spirit of this world, in paying such taxes, than is the case with us now. They had little or no share in civil government, and many of them declared that they were, through the power of God, separated from the spirit in which wars were, and being afflicted by the rulers on account of their testimony, there was less likelihood of their uniting in spirit with them in things inconsistent with the purity of truth. We, from the first settlement of this land, have known little or no troubles of that sort. The profession of our predecessors was for a time accounted reproachful, but at length their uprightness being understood by the rulers, and their innocent sufferings moving them, our way of worship was tolerated, and many of our members in these colonies became active in civil government. Being thus tried with favor and prosperity, this world appeared inviting; our minds have been turned to the improvement of our country, to merchandise and the sciences, amongst which are many things useful, if followed in pure wisdom; but in our present condition I believe it will not be denied that a carnal mind is gaining upon us. Some of our members, who are officers in civil government, are in one case or other, called upon in their respective stations to assist in things relative to the wars; but being in doubt whether to act or to crave to be excused from their office, if they see their brethren united in the payment of a tax to carry on the said wars, may think their case not much different, and so might quench the tender moving of the Holy Spirit in their minds. Thus, by small degrees, we might approach so near to fighting that the distinction would be little else than the name of a peaceable people.

It requires great self-denial and resignation of ourselves to God, to attain that state in which we can freely cease from fighting when wrongfully invaded, if, by our fighting, there were a probability of overcoming the invaders. Whoever

rightly attains to it does in some degree feel that spirit in which our Redeemer gave his life for us; and through Divine goodness many of our predecessors, and many now living, have learned this blessed lesson; but many others, having their religion chiefly by education, and not being enough acquainted with that cross which crucifies to the world, do manifest a temper distinguishable from that of an entire trust in God. In calmly considering these things, it has not appeared strange to me that an exercise has now fallen upon some, which, with respect to the outward means, is different from what was known to many of those who went before us.

Some time after the Yearly Meeting, the said committees met at Philadelphia, and, by adjournments, continued sitting several days. The calamities of war were now increasing; the frontier inhabitants of Pennsylvania were frequently surprised; some were slain, and many taken captive by the Indians; and while these committees sat, the corpse of one so slain was brought in a wagon, and taken through the streets of the city in his bloody garments, to alarm the people and rouse them to war.

Friends thus met were not all of one mind in relation to the tax, which, to those who scrupled it, made the way more difficult. To refuse an active payment at such a time might be construed into an act of disloyalty, and appeared likely to displease the rulers, not only here but also in England; still there was a scruple so fixed on the minds of many Friends that nothing moved it. It was a conference the most weighty that ever I was at, and the hearts of many were bowed in reverence before the Most High. Some Friends of the said committees who appeared easy to pay the tax, after several adjournments, withdrew; others of them continued till the last. At length an epistle of tender love and caution to Friends in Pennsylvania was drawn up, and being read several times and corrected, was signed by those who were free to sign it, and afterward sent to the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings...

Fourth of fourth month, 1758.—Orders came to some officers in Mount Holly to prepare quarters for a short time for about one hundred soldiers. An officer and two other men, all inhabitants of our town came to my house. The officer told me that he came to desire me to provide lodging and entertainment for two soldiers, and that six shillings a week per man would be allowed as pay for it. The case being new and unexpected I made no answer suddenly, but sat a time silent, my mind being inward. I was fully convinced that the proceedings in wars are inconsistent with the purity of the Christian religion; and to be hired to entertain men, who were then under pay as soldiers, was a difficulty with me. I expected they had legal authority for what they did; and after a short time I said to the officer, if the men are sent here for entertainment I believe I shall not refuse to admit them into my house, but the nature of the case is such that I expect I cannot keep them on hire; one of the men intimated that he thought I might do it

consistently with my religious principles. To which I made no reply, believing silence at that time best for me. Though they spoke of two, there came only one, who tarried at my house about two weeks, and behaved himself civilly. When the officer came to pay me, I told him I could not take pay, having admitted him into my house in a passive obedience to authority. I was on horseback when he spoke to me, and as I turned from him, he said he was obliged to me; to which I said nothing; but, thinking on the expression, I grew uneasy; and afterwards, being near where he lived, I went and told him on what grounds I refused taking pay for keeping the soldier.

I have been informed that Thomas à Kempis lived and died in the profession of the Roman Catholic religion; and, in reading his writings, I have believed him to be a man of a true Christian spirit, as fully so as many who died martyrs because they could not join with some superstitions in that church. All true Christians are of the same spirit, but their gifts are diverse, Jesus Christ appointing to each one his peculiar office, agreeably to his infinite wisdom.

John Huss contended against the errors that had crept into the church, in opposition to the Council of Constance, which the historian reports to have consisted of some thousand persons. He modestly vindicated the cause which he believed was right; and though his language and conduct towards his judges appear to have been respectful, yet he never could be moved from the principles settled in his mind. To use his own words: “This I most humbly require and desire of you all, even for his sake who is the God of us all, that I be not compelled to the thing which my conscience doth repugn or strive against.” And again, in his answer to the Emperor: “I refuse nothing, most noble Emperor, whatsoever the council shall decree or determine upon me, only this one thing I except, that I do not offend God and my conscience.”

At length, rather than act contrary to that which he believed the Lord required of him, he chose to suffer death by fire. Thomas à Kempis, without disputing against the articles then generally agreed to, appears to have labored, by a pious example as well as by preaching and writing, to promote virtue and the inward spiritual religion; and I believe they were both sincere-hearted followers of Christ. True charity is an excellent virtue; and sincerely to labor for their good, whose belief in all points doth not agree with ours, is a happy state...

In this Yearly Meeting several weighty matters were considered, and toward the last that in relation to dealing with persons who purchase slaves. During the several sittings of the said meeting, my mind was frequently covered with inward prayer, and I could say with David, “that tears were my meat day and night.” The case of slave keeping lay heavy upon me; nor did I find any engagement to speak directly to any other matter before the meeting. Now when this case was opened several faithful Friends spoke weightily thereto, with which I was comforted; and

feeling a concern to cast in my mite, I said in substance as follows:—

“In the difficulties attending us in this life nothing is more precious than the mind of truth inwardly manifested; and it is my earnest desire that in this weighty matter we may be so truly humbled as to be favored with a clear understanding of the mind of truth, and follow it; this would be of more advantage to the Society than any medium not in the clearness of Divine wisdom. The case is difficult to some who have slaves, but if such set aside all self-interest, and come to be weaned from the desire of getting estates, or even from holding them together, when truth requires the contrary, I believe way will so open that they will know how to steer through those difficulties.”

Many Friends appeared to be deeply bowed under the weight of the work, and manifested much firmness in their love to the cause of truth and universal righteousness on the earth. And though none did openly justify the practice of slave-keeping in general, yet some appeared concerned lest the meeting should go into such measures as might give uneasiness to many brethren, alleging that if Friends patiently continued under the exercise the Lord in his time might open a way for the deliverance of these people. Finding an engagement to speak, I said, “My mind is often led to consider the purity of the Divine Being, and the justice of his judgments; and herein my soul is covered with awfulness. I cannot omit to hint of some cases where people have not been treated with the purity of justice, and the event has been lamentable. Many slaves on this continent are oppressed, and their cries have reached the ears of the Most High. Such are the purity and certainty of his judgments, that he cannot be partial in our favor. In infinite love and goodness he has opened our understanding from one time to another concerning our duty towards this people, and it is not a time for delay. Should we now be sensible of what he requires of us, and through a respect to the private interest of some persons, or through a regard to some friendships which do not stand on an immutable foundation, neglect to do our duty in firmness and constancy, still waiting for some extraordinary means to bring about their deliverance, God may by terrible things in righteousness answer us in this matter.”

Many faithful brethren labored with great firmness, and the love of truth in a good degree prevailed. Several who had Negroes expressed their desire that a rule might be made to deal with such Friends as offenders who bought slaves in future. To this it was answered that the root of this evil would never be effectually struck at until a thorough search was made in the circumstances of such Friends as kept Negroes, with respect to the righteousness of their motives in keeping them, that impartial justice might be administered throughout. Several Friends expressed their desire that a visit might be made to such Friends as kept slaves, and many others said that they believed liberty was the Negro’s right; to which, at length, no opposition was publicly made. A minute was made more full

on that subject than any heretofore; and the names of several Friends entered who were free to join in a visit to such as kept slaves...

### Chapter VI (1758-1759)

In the beginning of the twelfth month I joined, in company with my friends John Sykes and Daniel Stanton, in visiting such as had slaves. Some whose hearts were rightly exercised about them appeared to be glad of our visit, but in some places our way was more difficult. I often saw the necessity of keeping down to that root from whence our concern proceeded, and have cause, in reverent thankfulness, humbly to bow down before the Lord, who was near to me, and preserved my mind in calmness under some sharp conflicts, and begat a spirit of sympathy and tenderness in me towards some who were grievously entangled by the spirit of this world...

### Chapter VII (1760)

At Jericho, on Long Island, I wrote home as follows:—

24th of the fourth month, 1760.

Dearly Beloved Wife!

We are favored with health; have been at many meetings in East Jersey and on this island. My mind has been much in an inward, watchful frame since I left thee\*, greatly desiring that our proceedings may be singly in the will of our Heavenly Father.

As the present appearance of things is not joyous, I have been much shut up from outward cheerfulness, remembering that promise, “Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord”; as this from day to day has been revived in my memory, I have considered that his internal presence in our minds is a delight of all others the most pure, and that the honest-hearted not only delight in this, but in the effect of it upon them. He regards the helpless and distressed, and reveals his love to his children under affliction, who delight in beholding his benevolence, and in feeling Divine charity moving in them. Of this I may speak a little, for though since I left you I have often an engaging love and affection towards thee and my daughter, and friends about home, and going out at this time, when sickness is so great amongst you, is a trial upon me; yet I often remember there are many widows and fatherless, many who have poor tutors, many who have evil examples before them, and many whose minds are in captivity; for whose sake my heart is at times moved with compassion, so that I feel my mind resigned to

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\* In John’s day, “thee” and “thou” were more personal and informal forms of “you”, and would have communicated more warmth to the original readers. Instead of editing them, I thought it best to preserve the integrity of his sentiments.

leave you for a season, to exercise that gift which the Lord has bestowed on me, which though small compared with some, yet in this I rejoice, that I feel love unfeigned towards my fellow-creatures. I recommend you to the Almighty, who I trust, cares for you, and under a sense of his heavenly love remain,

Thy loving husband,

J. W.

### Chapter X (1769-1770)

TWELFTH of third month, 1769.—Having for some years past dieted myself on account of illness and weakness of body, and not having ability to travel by land as heretofore, I was at times favored to look with awfulness towards the Lord, before whom are all my ways, who alone has the power of life and death, and to feel thankfulness raised in me for this fatherly chastisement, believing that if I was truly humbled under it, all would work for good. While under this bodily weakness, my mind was at times exercised for my fellow-creatures in the West Indies, and I grew jealous over myself lest the disagreeableness of the prospect should hinder me from obediently attending to it; for, though I knew not that the Lord required me to go there, yet I believed that resignation was now called for in that respect...

Hearing of a vessel likely to sail from Philadelphia for Barbados, I spoke with one of the owners at Burlington, and soon after went to Philadelphia on purpose to speak to him again. He told me there was a Friend in town who was part owner of the said vessel. I felt no inclination to speak with the latter, but returned home. Awhile after I took leave of my family, and, going to Philadelphia, had some weighty conversation with the first-mentioned owner, and showed him a writing, as follows:—

“On the 25th of eleventh month, 1769, as an exercise with respect to a visit to Barbados has been weighty on my mind, I may express some of the trials which have attended me, under which I have at times rejoiced that I have felt my own self-will subjected.

“Some years ago I retailed rum, sugar, and molasses, the fruits of the labor of slaves, but had not then much concern about them save only that the rum might be used in moderation; nor was this concern so weightily attended to as I now believe it ought to have been. Having of late years been further informed respecting the oppressions too generally exercised in these islands, and thinking often on the dangers there are in connections of interest and fellowship with the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), I have felt an increasing concern to be wholly given up to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and it has seemed right that my small gain from this branch of trade should be applied in promoting righteousness on the earth. This was the first motion towards a visit to Barbados. I believed also

that part of my outward substance should be applied in paying my passage, if I went, and providing things in a lowly way for my subsistence; but when the time drew near in which I believed it required of me to be in readiness, a difficulty arose which has been a continual trial for some months past, under which I have, with abasement of mind from day to day, sought the Lord for instruction, having often had a feeling of the condition of one formerly, who bewailed himself because the Lord hid his face from him. During these exercises my heart has often been contrite, and I have had a tender feeling of the temptations of my fellow-creatures, laboring under expensive customs not agreeable to the simplicity that 'there is in Christ' (2 Cor. 2:3), and sometimes in the renewing of gospel love I have been helped to minister to others.

"That which has so closely engaged my mind, in seeking to the Lord for instruction, is, whether, after the full information I have had of the oppression which the slaves lie under who raise the West India produce, which I have gained by reading a caution and warning to Great Britain and her colonies, written by Anthony Benezet, it is right for me to take passage in a vessel employed in the West India trade.

"To trade freely with oppressors without laboring to discourage them from such unkind treatment, and to seek for gain by such traffic, tends, I believe, to make them more easy respecting their conduct than they would be if the cause of universal righteousness was humbly and firmly attended to by those in general with whom they have commerce; and that complaint of the Lord by his prophet, "They have strengthened the hands of the wicked," has very often revived in my mind. I may here add some circumstances that occurred to me before I had any prospect of a visit there. David longed for some water in a well beyond an army of Philistines who were at war with Israel, and some of his men, to please him, ventured their lives in passing through this army, and brought that water.

"It doth not appear that the Israelites were then scarce of water, but rather that David gave way to delicacy of taste; and having reflected on the danger to which these men had been exposed, he considered this water as their blood, and his heart smote him that he could not drink it, but he poured it out to the Lord. The oppression of the slaves which I have seen in several journeys southward on this continent, and the report of their treatment in the West Indies, have deeply affected me, and a care to live in the spirit of peace and minister no just cause of offence to my fellow-creatures having from time to time livingly revived in my mind, I have for some years past declined to gratify my taste with those sugars.

"I do not censure my brethren in these things, but I believe the Father of Mercies, to whom all mankind by creation are equally related, has heard the groans of this oppressed people and that he is preparing some to have a tender feeling of their condition. Trading in or the frequent use of any produce known to be raised by

the labor of those who are under such lamentable oppression has appeared to be a subject that may hereafter require the more serious consideration of the humble followers of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

"After long and mournful exercise I am now free to mention how things have opened in my mind, with desires that if it may please the Lord further to open his will to any of his children in this matter they may faithfully follow him in such further manifestation.

"The number of those who decline the use of West India produce, on account of the hard usage of the slaves who raise it, appears small, even among people truly pious; and the labors in Christian love on that subject of those who do are not very extensive. Were the trade from this continent to the West Indies to be stopped at once, I believe many there would suffer for want of bread. Did we on this continent and the inhabitants of the West Indies generally dwell in pure righteousness, I believe a small trade between us might be right. Under these considerations, when the thoughts of wholly declining the use of trading-vessels and of trying to hire a vessel to go under ballast have arisen in my mind, I have believed that the labors in gospel love hitherto bestowed in the cause of universal righteousness have not reached that height. If the trade to the West Indies were no more than was consistent with pure wisdom, I believe the passage-money would for good reasons be higher than it is now; and therefore, under deep exercise of mind, I have believed that I should not take advantage of this great trade and small passage-money, but, as a testimony in favor of less trading, should pay more than is common for others to pay if I go at this time."

The first-mentioned owner, having read the paper, went with me to the other owner, who also read over the paper, and we had some solid conversation, under which I felt myself bowed in reverence before the Most High. At length one of them asked me if I would go and see the vessel. But not having clearness in my mind to go, I went to my lodging and retired in private under great exercise of mind; and my tears were poured out before the Lord with inward cries that he would graciously help me under these trials. I believe my mind was resigned, but I did not feel clearness to proceed; and my own weakness and the necessity of Divine instruction were impressed upon me.

I was for a time as one who knew not what to do and was tossed as in a tempest; under which affliction the doctrine of Christ, "Take no thought for the morrow," arose livingly before me, and I was favored to get into a good degree of stillness. Having been near two days in town, I believed my obedience to my Heavenly Father consisted in returning homeward; I therefore went over among Friends on the Jersey shore and waited until the morning on which the vessel was appointed to sail. As I lay in bed the latter part of that night my mind was comforted, and I felt what I esteemed a fresh confirmation that it was the Lord's will that I should

pass through some further labors near home; so I went thither, and still felt like a sojourner with my family. In the fresh spring of pure love I had some labors in a private way among Friends on a subject relating to truth's testimony, under which I had frequently been exercised in heart for some years. I remember, as I walked on the road under this exercise, that passage in Ezekiel came fresh upon me, "Whithersoever their faces were turned thither they went." And I was graciously helped to discharge my duty in the fear and dread of the Almighty...

In the course of a few weeks it pleased the Lord to visit me with a pleurisy; and after I had lain a few days and felt the disorder very grievous, I was thoughtful how it might end. I had of late, through various exercises, been much weaned from the pleasant things of this life; and I now thought if it were the Lord's will to put an end to my labors and graciously to receive me into the arms of his mercy, death would be acceptable to me; but if it were his will further to refine me under affliction, and to make me in any degree useful in his church, I desired not to die. I may with thankfulness say that in this case I felt resignedness wrought in me and had no inclination to send for a doctor, believing, if it were the Lord's will through outward means to raise me up, some sympathizing Friends would be sent to minister to me; which accordingly was the case. But though I was carefully attended, yet the disorder was at times so heavy that I had no expectation of recovery. One night in particular my bodily distress was great; my feet grew cold, and the cold increased up my legs towards my body; at that time I had no inclination to ask my nurse to apply anything warm to my feet, expecting my end was near. After I had lain near ten hours in this condition, I closed my eyes, thinking whether I might now be delivered out of the body; but in these awful moments my mind was livingly opened to behold the church; and strong engagements were begotten in me for the everlasting well being of my fellow-creatures. I felt in the spring of pure love that I might remain some time longer in the body, to fill up according to my measure that which remains of the afflictions of Christ, and to labor for the good of the church; after which I requested my nurse to apply warmth to my feet, and I revived. The next night, feeling a weighty exercise of spirit and having a solid friend sitting up with me, I requested him to write what I said, which he did as follows:—

"Fourth day of the first month, 1770, about five in the morning.—I have seen in the Light of the Lord that the day is approaching when the man that is most wise in human policy shall be the greatest fool; and the arm that is mighty to support injustice shall be broken to pieces; the enemies of righteousness shall make a terrible rattle, and shall mightily torment one another; for He that is omnipotent is rising up to judgment, and will plead the cause of the oppressed; and He commanded me to open the vision."

Near a week after this, feeling my mind livingly opened, I sent for a neighbor, who, at my request, wrote as follows:—

"The place of prayer is a precious habitation; for I now saw that the prayers of the saints were precious incense; and a trumpet was given to me that I might sound forth this language; that the children might hear it and be invited together to this precious habitation, where the prayers of the saints, as sweet incense, arise before the throne of God and the Lamb. I saw this habitation to be safe,—to be inwardly quiet when there were great stirrings and commotions in the world.

"Prayer, at this day, in pure resignation, is a precious place: the trumpet is sounded; the call goes forth to the church that she gather to the place of pure inward prayer; and her habitation is safe."

### Chapter XI (1772)

HAVING been some time under a religious concern to prepare for crossing the seas, in order to visit Friends in the northern parts of England, and more particularly in Yorkshire, after consideration I thought it expedient to inform Friends of it at our Monthly Meeting at Burlington, who, having unity with me therein, gave me a certificate...

In the fourth month following I thought the time was come for me to make some inquiry for a suitable conveyance; and as my concern was principally towards the northern parts of England, it seemed most proper to go in a vessel bound to Liverpool or Whitehaven. While I was at Philadelphia deliberating on this subject I was informed that my beloved friend Samuel Emlen, junior, intended to go to London, and had taken a passage for himself in the cabin of the ship called the Mary and Elizabeth, of which James Sparks was master, and John Head, of the city of Philadelphia, one of the owners; and feeling a drawing in my mind towards the steerage of the same ship, I went first and opened to Samuel the feeling I had concerning it.

My beloved friend wept when I spoke to him, and appeared glad that I had thoughts of going in the vessel with him, though my prospect was toward the steerage: and he offering to go with me, we went on board, first into the cabin,—a commodious room,—and then into the steerage, where we sat down on a chest, the sailors being busy about us. The owner of the ship also came and sat down with us. My mind was turned towards Christ, the Heavenly Counselor, and feeling at this time my own will subjected, my heart was contrite before him. A motion was made by the owner to go and sit in the cabin, as a place more retired; but I felt easy to leave the ship, and making no agreement as to a passage in her, told the owner if I took a passage in the ship I believed it would be in the steerage; but did not say much as to my exercise in that case.

After I went to my lodgings, and the case was a little known in town, a Friend laid before me the great inconvenience attending a passage in the steerage, which

for a time appeared very discouraging to me.

I soon after went to bed, and my mind was under a deep exercise before the Lord, whose helping hand was manifested to me as I slept that night, and his love strengthened my heart. In the morning I went with two Friends on board the vessel again, and after a short time spent therein, I went with Samuel Emlen to the house of the owner, to whom, in the hearing of Samuel only, I opened my exercise in relation to a scruple I felt with regard to a passage in the cabin, in substance as follows:—

“That on the outside of that part of the ship where the cabin was I observed sundry sorts of carved work and imagery; that in the cabin I observed some superfluity of workmanship of several sorts; and that according to the ways of men’s reckoning, the sum of money to be paid for a passage in that apartment has some relation to the expense of furnishing it to please the minds of such as give way to a conformity to this world; and that in this, as in other cases, the moneys received from the passengers are calculated to defray the cost of these superfluities, as well as the other expenses of their passage. I therefore felt a scruple with regard to paying my money to be applied to such purposes.”

As my mind was now opened, I told the owner that I had, at several times, in my travels, seen great oppressions on this continent, at which my heart had been much affected and brought into a feeling of the state of the sufferers; and having many times been engaged in the fear and love of God to labor with those under whom the oppressed have been borne down and afflicted, I have often perceived that with a view to get riches and to provide estates for children, that they may live conformably to the customs and honors of this world, many are entangled in the spirit of oppression, and the exercise of my soul had been such that I could not find peace in joining in anything which I saw was against that wisdom which is pure.

After this I agreed for a passage in the steerage; and hearing that Joseph White had desired to see me, I went to his house, and the next day home, where I tarried two nights. Early the next morning I parted with my family under a sense of the humbling hand of God upon me, and, going to Philadelphia, had an opportunity with several of my beloved friends, who appeared to be concerned for me on account of the unpleasant situation of that part of the vessel in which I was likely to lodge. In these opportunities my mind, through the mercies of the Lord, was kept low in an inward waiting for his help; and Friends having expressed their desire that I might have a more convenient place than the steerage, did not urge it, but appeared disposed to leave me to the Lord...

The leading of a young generation in that pure way in which the wisdom of this world has no place, where parents and tutors, humbly waiting for the heavenly

Counselor, may example them in the truth as it is in Jesus, has for several days been the exercise of my mind. O, how safe, how quiet, is that state where the soul stands in pure obedience to the voice of Christ and a watchful care is maintained not to follow the voice of the stranger! Here Christ is felt to be our Shepherd, and under his leading people are brought to a stability; and where he doth not lead forward, we are bound in the bonds of pure love to stand still and wait upon him.

In the love of money and in the wisdom of this world, business is proposed, then the urgency of affairs push forward, and the mind cannot in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us. The love of God is manifested in graciously calling us to come out of that which stands in confusion; but if we bow not in the name of Jesus, if we give not up those prospects of gain which in the wisdom of this world are open before us, but say in our hearts, “I must needs go on; and in going on I hope to keep as near the purity of truth as the business before me will admit of,” the mind remains entangled and the shining of the light of life into the soul is obstructed.

Surely the Lord calls to mourning and deep humiliation that in his fear we may be instructed and led safely through the great difficulties and perplexities in this present age. In an entire subjection of our wills the Lord graciously opens a way for his people, where all their wants are bounded by his wisdom; and here we experience the substance of what Moses the prophet figured out in the water of separation as a purification from sin.

Esau is mentioned as a child red all over like a hairy garment. In Esau is represented the natural will of man. In preparing the water of separation a red heifer without blemish, on which there had been no yoke, was to be slain and her blood sprinkled by the priest seven times towards the tabernacle of the congregation; then her skin, her flesh, and all pertaining to her, was to be burnt without the camp, and of her ashes the water was prepared. Thus, the crucifying of the old man, or natural will, is represented; and hence comes a separation from that carnal mind which is death. “He who toucheth the dead body of a man and purifieth not himself with the water of separation, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; he is unclean.” (Num. 19:13.)

If any through the love of gain engage in business wherein they dwell as among the tombs and touch the bodies of those who are dead should through the infinite love of God feel the power of the cross of Christ to crucify them to the world, and therein learn humbly to follow the divine Leader, here is the judgment of this world, here the prince of this world is cast out. The water of separation is felt; and though we have been among the slain, and through the desire of gain have touched the dead body of a man, yet in the purifying love of Christ we are washed in the water of separation; we are brought off from that business, from that gain and from that fellowship which is not agreeable to his holy will. I have

felt a renewed confirmation in the time of this voyage, that the Lord, in his infinite love, is calling to his visited children, so to give up all outward possessions and means of getting treasures, that his Holy Spirit may have free course in their hearts and direct them in all their proceedings. To feel the substance pointed at in this figure man must know death as to his own will.

“No man can see God and live.” This was spoken by the Almighty to Moses the prophet and opened by our blessed Redeemer. As death comes on our own wills, and a new life is formed in us, the heart is purified and prepared to understand clearly, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” In purity of heart the mind is divinely opened to behold the nature of universal righteousness, or the righteousness of the kingdom of God. “No man has seen the Father save he that is of God, he has seen the Father.”

The natural mind is active about the things of this life, and in this natural activity business is proposed and a will is formed in us to go forward in it. And so long as this natural will remains unsubjected, there remains an obstruction to the clearness of Divine light operating in us; but when we love God with all our heart and with all our strength, in this love we love our neighbor as ourselves; and a tenderness of heart is felt towards all people for whom Christ died, even those who, as to outward circumstances, may be to us as the Jews were to the Samaritans. “Who is my neighbor?” See this question answered by our Savior, Luke 10:30. In this love we can say that Jesus is the Lord; and in this reformation in our souls, manifested in a full reformation of our lives, wherein all things are new, and all things are of God (2 Cor. 5:18), the desire of gain is subjected.

When employment is honestly followed in the light of truth, and people become diligent in business, “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11), the meaning of the name is opened to us: “This is the name by which he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (Jer. 23:6.) O, how precious is this name! it is like ointment poured out. The chaste virgins are in love with the Redeemer; and for promoting his peaceable kingdom in the world are content to endure hardness like good soldiers; and are so separated in spirit from the desire of riches, that in their employments they become extensively careful to give no offence, either to Jew or Heathen, or to the church of Christ...

## Chapter XII (1772)

[Note from the edition published by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company: There is a story told of his first appearance in England which I have from my friend, William J. Allinson, editor of the Friends' Review, and which he assures me is well authenticated. The vessel reached London on the morning of the fifth day of the week, and John Woolman, knowing that the London Yearly Meeting was then in session, lost no time in reaching it. Coming in late and unannounced,

his peculiar dress and manner excited attention and apprehension that he was an itinerant enthusiast. He presented his certificate from Friends in America, but the dissatisfaction still remained, and some one remarked that perhaps the stranger Friend might feel that his dedication of himself to this apprehended service was accepted, without further labor, and that he might now feel free to return to his home. John Woolman sat silent for a space, seeking the unerring counsel of Divine Wisdom. He was profoundly affected by the unfavorable reception he met with, and his tears flowed freely. In the love of Christ and his fellow men he had, at a painful sacrifice, taken his life in his hands, and left behind the peace and endearments of home. That love still flowed out toward the people of England; must it henceforth be pent up in his own heart? He rose at last, and stated that he could not feel himself released from his prospect of labor in England. Yet he could not travel in the ministry without the unity of Friends; and while that was withheld he could not feel easy to be of any cost to them. He could not go back as had been suggested; but he was acquainted with a mechanical trade, and while the impediment to his services continued he hoped Friends would be kindly willing to employ him in such business as he was capable of, that he might not be chargeable to any.

A deep silence prevailed over the assembly, many of whom were touched by the wise simplicity of the stranger's words and manner. After a season of waiting, John Woolman felt that words were given him to utter as a minister of Christ. The spirit of his Master bore witness to them in the hearts of his hearers. When he closed, the Friend who had advised against his further service rose up and humbly confessed his error, and avowed his full unity with the stranger. All doubt was removed; there was a general expression of unity and sympathy, and John Woolman, owned by his brethren, passed on to his work.

There is no portrait of John Woolman; and had photography been known in his day it is not at all probable that the sun-artist would have been permitted to delineate his features. That, while eschewing all superfluity and expensive luxury, he was scrupulously neat in his dress and person may be inferred from his general character and from the fact that one of his serious objections to dyed clothing was that it served to conceal uncleanness, and was, therefore, detrimental to real purity. It is, however, quite probable that his outer man, on the occasion referred to, was suggestive of a hasty toilet in the crowded steerage. End of note.]

Stage-coaches frequently go upwards of one hundred miles in twenty-four hours; and I have heard Friends say in several places that it is common for horses to be killed with hard driving, and that many others are driven till they grow blind. Post-boys pursue their business, each one to his stage, all night through the winter. Some boys who ride long stages suffer greatly in winter nights, and at several places I have heard of their being frozen to death. So great is the hurry in

the spirit of this world, that in aiming to do business quickly and to gain wealth the creation at this day doth loudly groan.

As my journey has been without a horse, I have had several offers of being assisted on my way in these stagecoaches, but have not been in them; nor have I had freedom to send letters by these posts in the present way of riding, the stages being so fixed, and one boy dependent on another as to time, and going at great speed, that in long cold winter nights the poor boys suffer much. I heard in America of the way of these posts, and cautioned Friends in the General Meeting of ministers and elders at Philadelphia, and in the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders in London, not to send letters to me on any common occasion by post. And though on this account I may be likely not to hear so often from my family left behind, yet for righteousness' sake I am, through Divine favor, made content.

I have felt great distress of mind since I came on this island, on account of the members of our Society being mixed with the world in various sorts of traffic, carried on in impure channels. Great is the trade to Africa for slaves; and for the loading of these ships a great number of people are employed in their factories, among whom are many of our Society. Friends in early times refused on a religious principle to make or trade in superfluities, of which we have many testimonies on record; but for lack of faithfulness, some, whose examples were of note in our Society, gave way, from which others took more liberty. Members of our Society worked in superfluities, and bought and sold them, and thus dimness of sight came over many; at length Friends got into the use of some superfluities in dress and in the furniture of their houses, which has spread from less to more, till superfluity of some kinds is common among us.

In this declining state many look at the example of others and too much neglect the pure feeling of truth. Of late years a deep exercise has attended my mind, that Friends may dig deep, may carefully cast forth the loose matter and get down to the rock, the sure foundation, and there hearken to that Divine voice which gives a clear and certain sound; and I have felt in that which doth not receive, that if Friends who have known the truth keep in that tenderness of heart where all views of outward gain are given up, and their trust is only in the Lord, he will graciously lead some to be patterns of deep self-denial in things relating to trade and handicraft labor; and others who have plenty of the treasures of this world will be examples of a plain frugal life, and pay wages to such as they may hire more liberally than is now customary in some places...

In a time of sickness, a little more than two years and a half ago, I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy color between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I

might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before; I believed it was the voice of an angel who spoke to the other angels; the words were, "John Woolman is dead." I soon remembered that I was once John Woolman, and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean. I believed beyond doubting that it was the voice of a holy angel, but as yet it was a mystery to me.

I was then carried in spirit to the mines where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ, at which I was grieved, for his name to me was precious. I was then informed that these heathens were told that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ, and they said among themselves, "If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant."

All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery; and in the morning, my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was, and they telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed, for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to any one, but was very desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery.

My tongue was often so dry that I could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture, and as I lay still for a time I at length felt a Divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and I then said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Then the mystery was opened and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language "John Woolman is dead," meant no more than the death of my own will.

My natural understanding now returned as before, and I saw that people setting off their tables with silver vessels at entertainments was often stained with worldly glory, and that in the present state of things I should take heed how I fed myself out of such vessels. Going to our Monthly Meeting soon after my recovery, I dined at a Friend's house where drink was brought in silver vessels, and not in any other. Wanting something to drink, I told him my case with weeping, and he ordered some drink for me in another vessel. I afterwards went through the same exercise in several Friends' houses in America, as well as in England, and I have cause to acknowledge with humble reverence the loving-kindness of my Heavenly Father, who has preserved me in such a tender frame of mind, that none, I believe, have ever been offended at what I have said on that subject.

After this sickness I spoke not in public meetings for worship for nearly one year, but my mind was very often in company with the oppressed slaves as I sat in meetings; and though under his dispensation I was shut up from speaking, yet the spring of the gospel ministry was many times livingly opened in me, and the Divine gift operated by abundance of weeping, in feeling the oppression of this people. It being so long since I passed through this dispensation, and the matter remaining fresh and lively in my mind, I believe it safest for me to commit it to writing...

On this visit to England I have felt some instructions sealed on my mind, which I am concerned to leave in writing for the use of such as are called to the station of a minister of Christ.

Christ being the Prince of Peace, and we being no more than ministers, it is necessary for us not only to feel a concern in our first going forth, but to experience the renewing thereof in the appointment of meetings. I felt a concern in America to prepare for this voyage, and being through the mercy of God brought safe hither, my heart was like a vessel that wanted vent. For several weeks after my arrival, when my mouth was opened in meetings, it was like the raising of a gate in a watercourse when a weight of water lay upon it. In these labors there was a fresh visitation to many, especially to the youth; but sometimes I felt poor and empty, and yet there appeared a necessity to appoint meetings. In this I was exercised to abide in the pure life of truth, and in all my labors to watch diligently against the motions of self in my own mind.

I have frequently found a necessity to stand up when the spring of the ministry was low, and to speak from the necessity in that which subjects the will of the creature; and herein I was united with the suffering seed, and found inward sweetness in these mortifying labors. As I have been preserved in a watchful attention to the divine Leader, under these dispensations enlargement at times has followed, and the power of truth has risen higher in some meetings than I ever knew it before through me. Thus I have been more and more instructed as to the necessity of depending, not upon a concern that I felt in America to come on a visit to England, but upon the daily instructions of Christ, the Prince of Peace...

O, how deep is Divine wisdom! Christ puts forth his ministers and goes before them; and O, how great is the danger of departing from the pure feeling of that which leads safely! Christ knows the state of the people, and in the pure feeling of the gospel ministry their states are opened to his servants. Christ knows when the fruit-bearing branches themselves have need of purging. O that these lessons may be remembered by me! and that all who appoint meetings may proceed in the pure feeling of duty!

I have sometimes felt a necessity to stand up, but that spirit which is of the world

has so much prevailed in many, and the pure life of truth has been so pressed down, that I have gone forward, not as one traveling in a road cast up and well prepared, but as a man walking through a miry place in which are stones here and there safe to step on, but so situated that one step being taken, time is necessary to see where to step next. Now I find that in a state of pure obedience the mind learns contentment in appearing weak and foolish to that wisdom which is of the world; and in these lowly labors, they who stand in a low place and are rightly exercised under the cross will find nourishment. The gift is pure; and while the eye is single in attending thereto the understanding is preserved clear; self is kept out. We rejoice in filling up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church.

The natural man loves eloquence, and many love to hear eloquent orations, and if there be not a careful attention to the gift, men who have once labored in the pure gospel ministry, growing weary of suffering, and ashamed of appearing weak, may kindle a fire, compass themselves about with sparks, and walk in the light, not of Christ, who is under suffering, but of that fire which they in departing from the gift have kindled, in order that those hearers who have left the meek, suffering state for worldly wisdom may be warmed with this fire and speak highly of their labors. That which is of God gathers to God, and that which is of the world is owned by the world.

In this journey a labor has attended my mind, that the ministers among us may be preserved in the meek, feeling life of truth, where we may have no desire but to follow Christ and to be with him, that when he is under suffering, we may suffer with him, and never desire to rise up in dominion, but as he, by the virtue of his own spirit, may raise us...

### The Death of John Woolman

JOHN WOOLMAN died at York, England, October 7, 1772. His last days are memorialized in the following extract from "The testimony of Friends in Yorkshire at their Quarterly Meeting, held at York the 24th and 25th of the third month, 1773, concerning John Woolman, of Mount Holly, in the Province of New Jersey, North America, who departed this life at the house of our Friend Thomas Priestman, in the suburbs of this city, the 7th of the tenth month, 1772, and was interred in the burial-ground of Friends the 9th of the same, aged about fifty-two years:

"THIS our valuable friend having been under a religious engagement for some time to visit Friends in this nation, and more especially us in the northern parts, undertook the same in full concurrence and near sympathy with his friends and brethren at home, as appeared by certificates from the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings to which he belonged, and from the Spring Meeting of ministers and elders held at Philadelphia for Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

“He arrived in the city of London the beginning of the last Yearly Meeting, and, after attending that meeting, traveled northward, visiting the Quarterly Meetings of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, and Worcestershire, and diverse particular meetings in his way.

“He visited many meetings on the west side of this country, also some in Lancashire and Westmoreland, from whence he came to our Quarterly Meeting in the last ninth month, and though much out of health, yet was enabled to attend all the sittings of that meeting except the last.

“His disorder, which proved the small-pox, increased speedily upon him, and was very afflicting, under which he was supported in much meekness, patience, and Christian fortitude. To those who attended him in his illness, his mind appeared to be centered in Divine love, under the precious influence whereof we believe he finished his course, and entered into the mansions of everlasting rest.

“In the early part of his illness he requested a Friend to write, and he broke forth thus:

““O Lord my God! The amazing horrors of darkness were gathered around me and covered me all over, and I saw no way to go forth; I felt the misery of my fellow-creatures separated from the Divine harmony, and it was heavier than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it; I lifted up my hand and stretched out my arm, but there was none to help me; I looked round about and was amazed. In the depth of misery, O Lord! I remembered that thou art omnipotent, that I had called thee Father, and I felt that I loved thee, and I was made quiet in thy will, and I waited for deliverance from thee; thou hadst pity upon me when no man could help me; I saw that meekness under suffering was showed to us in the most affecting example of thy Son, and thou taught me to follow him, and I said, Thy will, O Father, be done.’

“Many more of his weighty expressions might have been inserted here, but it was deemed unnecessary, they being already published in print.”

THE END