

The Editor's Prefatory Address

The author of this volume having gone “the way of all the earth,” and yielded up his spirit to the God of the spirits of all flesh, it becomes my duty, as the individual into whose hands the manuscript was by him in a very peculiar manner consigned, not only to lay before my readers some of the circumstances under which the work now makes its appearance; but also to give some brief account of my beloved and lamented friend, whose unlooked-for translation from this state of being to a better, I trust will prove on the minds of many as a seal to his labor of love.

However liable we all are in the present probationary condition, to be mistaken in our estimates of men and things, and even by the soothing snares of friendship in its purest forms, to be led away from that unerring balance of the sanctuary, the judgment of truth; yet surely there is some call upon me on the present occasion, to bear my testimony to the riches of that grace, by which my friend was what he was: and therefore I trust, that in attempting to perform this debt of love, I shall be preserved from speaking unduly of the creature, as well as from neglecting to ascribe the glory of every good word and work to that Divine Source, whose workmanship at the best we are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2:10. “Died Abner as a fool dies?” said David, when he lamented the death of a valiant man. And it has, in my best moments, when greatly divested of personal or selfish considerations of my own loss, even been cause of joy and gratitude to the Lord, who gives and takes away in his admirable discretion and good pleasure, that he saw fit to remove my dear friend, while “his bow abode in strength,” while he had his armor so evidently girt about him; when the spiritual weapons of the Christian's warfare were even in his hands,—in the strength of his time, in the clearness of his spirit; having been thus manifestly carried through to the precise completion of an undertaking that appeared to be laid upon him as his appointed duty, and about which he had thought it due to the cause of the Gospel of truth to lay out the energies and the prayers of his soul.

And how was it, he was thus devotedly engaged in an almost unremitting manner for some months together, abridging himself of every lawful indulgence, and putting all other claims than this, of whatever kind they might be, into the smallest compass that duty would allow of; without knowing, but as though he knew, the very hours of his time were to be just barely sufficient for this his last day's work. Truly, “the Lord's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts;” he knows the end from the beginning, and orders all things in harmony and wisdom; nor will he permit his upright, faithful, simple-hearted children, who look up to him for counsel and strength in all their steppings, materially to contravene his purposes, or widely to deviate from fulfilling, even in the midst of all their manifold weaknesses, his holy will. He keeps them in the hollow of his hand, he hides them under the shadow of his wing, he heals all their backslidings, he overrules everything that concerns them for their good, turning all to his own glory.

These musings of a mind, that has abundant cause to observe and extol the mercies of Him, who is “wonderful in counsel and excellent in working,” will not I trust be deemed irrelevant or unseasonable.

Ever since I have been capable of appreciating the purity and excellence of “the Truth as it is in Jesus,” the character and productions of those departed ancients, who first lifted up a standard to the nations in these latter days, altogether so congenial, as I believe, with the spirit and injunctions of our Holy Redeemer, have been a subject of deep interest to me. The author of the present volume had been for years one with me in entertaining this interest: we had often communed together on that remarkable era, when the Society of Friends first became known as a distinct church; and we had many times reciprocated the firm conviction, that as the professors of the Christian name come back to the simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel, such writings and such characters are likely to be more duly valued than has hitherto been the case. If this was infatuation, it was a natural, an honest, a consistent infatuation. We have need every one of us, to be fully persuaded in our own minds respecting that which makes for peace and edification in our belief and practice; for, “he that doubts is condemned if he eat,” and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Certainly, had I any real misgiving as to those things which may be known of God, and to which through education or otherwise I found myself conforming, it would seem due to my own soul and to that religious Society among whom I walked, to take means of obtaining a solid and genuine satisfaction.

In the spring of the past year, I communicated to my beloved friend, the author, a plan that had matured on my mind, of reviving the writings of the early Friends in a form accessible to their successors of every class; believing too, that many of these productions would be acceptable to the spiritual followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in general, whether themselves prepared or not to follow out our Christian testimonies to their full extent. My plan was almost anticipated by my friend, and cordially united with; and in the further digestion of my arrangements, he was always anxious to afford me all the assistance and encouragement in his power. In the course of our frequent interchange of sentiment on this subject, he conveyed to me the great value he placed upon the character of William Dewsbury, and the strong desire he had to see a memoir of this worthy, upheld in a manner consistent with his standing and the line of his testimony. I besought him to take the matter home with him, and dwell upon it, and see if this engagement did not devolve upon himself. During part of the summer and autumn of the year, we were separated from each other; when, on my return from a journey, he produced the manuscript of this volume. Still, there was much to be done to it, before it could be prepared for the press; and after bestowing further diligence in perfecting it, in the freedom of unreserved friendship, he committed the whole to me, charging me not to spare such suggestions as I believed would tend to the object of his heart. Some alterations I had proposed before it thus came into my hands, and my meaning was uniformly accepted; and I have good reason to believe from our long intimacy, that such corrections as have been made since his removal, would have been adopted equally with those that were submitted to his eye. This course I deemed to be only justice to his memory and to myself, in carrying forward the publication, under the peculiar circumstances of the case. Some channels of inquiry for additional information even then remained unsearched; these I have, since the author’s decease, looked into, and the result of my

endeavors is marked out in the ensuing pages to the notice of the reader, by brackets enclosing such fresh matter.

With regard to the old work, from which the epistles and some other papers are now reprinted, the title thus stood:—*The Faithful Testimony of that Ancient Servant of the Lord, and Minister of the Everlasting Gospel, William Dewsbury, in his Books, Epistles, and Writings, Collected and Printed for Future Service. London, 1689.* Like many of the works of that day, it is so indifferently got up, that the correct import of some passages is not very plain, and even admits of misinterpretation; and as to those autograph letters of William Dewsbury's that have come under my notice, while the writing is for the most part difficult, the construction of the sentences is very far more so. On this account, it was requisite to make such transpositions and slight emendations as might clear from obscurity the truths intended to be set forth, and render them capable of appreciation.

It would seem scarcely needful for me to observe to members of our own religious communion, that the collected works of William Dewsbury were published with the express concurrence of the Society, and that they have been from time to time referred to, both by them and by their adversaries, from that day to the present, as conveying doctrine and exhortation well approved by the body at large. With respect to such comments on these principles as appear interspersed under the author's own hand throughout the present volume, I trust they will very uniformly be found harmonizing in no ambiguous manner with the tenor of the rest; that he has put no false gloss by fair words upon these ancient, unalterable principles, but has with all honesty and good judgment upheld and illustrated them.—Here I would eagerly express some of the warmth of desire, which has often pervaded my heart while engaged in revising these sheets, that the professing members of a church, so distinguished as ours has been by the protection and nurture of her Head and Husband, may be encouraged by observing how memorably He has stood by her, and by all her simply obedient children whose souls have been true to Him:—He has indeed borne them as on eagles' wings. He has cherished them in his bosom. This small volume is but a single evidence, among very many that might be consulted by the inquiring mind, all proving that Divine support and strength which uniformly attended the uncompromising faithfulness of those, who have gone before us in this Christian path and warfare. And is not the same power ever near, to counsel and to help his dependent little ones in every age, to guide even into all truth, yes, to preserve them from the most specious devices of our soul's enemy? It is true, this cruel enemy and his instruments, would persuade us of this day, that such immediate guidance is dubious and uncertain, and that the way of the cross is too difficult and offensive to be trodden. But how shall any of us, who have tasted the lovingkindness and good presence of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in us, for a moment listen to these suggestions? How shall we turn aside from following on to know Him in these his heavenly visitations? By these, he called and awakened us at the first, touching and drawing our hearts after himself; in this manner he brought us "out of darkness into his marvelous light," which we have indeed found to be the very "light of life," cheering and sustaining our drooping minds under every discouraging circumstance. Hitherto he has helped us; we have found grace to help, sufficient grace, according to all our times of need; he has strengthened with the

might of his Spirit our inner man, —and just in proportion as we have patiently awaited on him for the lifting up of his countenance upon us. Shall we then as individuals or as a people forego our privileges, shall we ever shift our ground, allow our feet to be beguiled to backsliding, by in anywise accommodating ourselves to the low views and false faith which so evidently abound? Should we not rather be afresh incited by all that we read and hear, observe and undoubtedly feel, of the operation of the grace of Jesus Christ,—should we not be animated to a grateful surrender of soul unto Him, who has wrought, and is still willing to work in and for us great deliverances, plenteous redemption! Should we not be hereby engaged to cleave the more closely unto Him, whose hand is not at all shortened, whose faithfulness has not failed, and whose forbearances have been lengthened out, his mercies multiplied upon us!

It was thus, the youthful Dewsbury, while a poor shepherd boy, sought to be acquainted with and to serve his Heavenly Shepherd, his Almighty Father and Friend,—to know His voice from the voice of every stranger. It was thus also, his biographer, the author of the present volume, was concerned according to his line of things faithfully to occupy with the measure of grace bestowed upon him; earnestly desiring that hereby Christ, the giver of all grace, might be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

—JOHN BARCLAY

Introductory Chapter

Design of the Work—The settlement of the Society of Friends, an especial instance of Divine power manifested to the Church—Its consequences seen in a reforming spirit—Discipline of the Society; its origin, character, and objects.

The object contemplated by the present volume, is to display the wonderful dealings of the Lord in the latter days, to a portion of his militant church; and in doing this, to place before my readers, whether belonging to the religious Society of Friends, or to other denominations, a practical illustration of those principles, which, by an especial extension of Divine regard, were opened to the minds of a few obscure individuals, and through their labours to many others, as those of vital and primitive Christianity.

The darkness which had overspread the hemisphere of the visible church, previous to the period of the Reformation, was such, as to cause no surprise, that a belief in immediate revelation, as held by the people called Quakers, should have ceased to exist, since the days of the apostles and first Christians. That any definite series of facts had arisen, between that period and the middle of the sixteenth century, on which the body of professed believers were likely to adopt an opposite conclusion, does not appear to have been the case. For although every influx of spiritual light, which at intervals had with more or less

force broken in upon the minds of individuals, was from the only true Source of Light itself, and tended to prepare them for something further; the extraordinary train of circumstances which attended the rise and settlement of the Society of Friends, were such as rendered that event an era in church history.

To some of those circumstances, constituting in their aggregate sense what may be justly called a religious phenomenon, it is the design of the present work to draw the attention of the serious reader. For, notwithstanding “this thing was not done in a corner,” and Friends have not been a people whose principles have led them to hide their Lord’s talent in a napkin, or the light of their testimony under a bushel; yet the various denominations of Christians, even at the present day, are too little aware what abundant evidences of the Divine power and presence were vouchsafed on the first gathering of this people into a distinct and visible community; and how admirably they were thereby led forth and instructed in the adoption of that beautiful order of church discipline, which has been attended with so many and great advantages down to the present time.

Without question, George Fox and his “yokefellows” witnessed in a wonderful manner the overshadowing goodness, power, and mercy of the great Head and High Priest of our profession: for in His wisdom and by His grace, notwithstanding every obstruction which was permitted to afflict them, they “triumphed gloriously,” until at length their enemies were laid asleep. Nor has it been in this respect alone, that the experience of this people has run parallel with that of the primitive church; but, with them also, the cessation of persecution has been attended by a state of rest and security, and even of lukewarmness and ease, which, when compared with the zeal of their first days, may in too general a way appear more like death than life. There has been, however, through such of their faithful successors as have been raised up from one generation to another, gradually spreading over the community at large, a measure of the same leaven, with which the early Friends were so abundantly imbued; even that which proclaimed “peace on earth and good will towards men,” under the all-powerful influence of heavenly harmony and love.

Much has been said at various times, and much may continue to be said, as to the supposed enthusiasm and even fanaticism of the first Friends. If to be “zealously affected in a good cause,” in a day of thick darkness, be enthusiasm, both they and the first Christians were indeed enthusiasts. But the calling of the early Friends was of a very peculiar nature, and one which was not assumed by themselves through any choice or contrivance of their own: they were, it may be truly said, employed as instruments to lead the way into a new or further department of church reform, and their appearance, in most respects, was therefore new and peculiar. If, under such circumstances, to yield obedience to that measure of light, in and by which individual duty was made known to them, is to be branded with the term enthusiasm, or a worse name, because by such obedience they were led into acts which the world accounted madness, then they were enthusiasts truly. And further, if such terms are to be attached to the operation of that efficacious faith, by which its possessor is enabled to bear the contradiction of sinners against himself, without fainting or weariness, then were the early Friends enthusiasts and fanatics. Fanaticism and intolerance, however, are found to be often closely allied; and accordingly, the real fanatics of those days

were, in very many instances, to be clearly detected among their opponents and their persecutors.

On the contrary, in the general course of their proceedings. Friends acted under a degree of the influence of that holy “spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” which so largely possessed the primitive believers; and like these, the zeal of Friends in the main, will, on investigation, be found to have been a well directed and a prudent, though a glowing and active zeal. This assertion, notwithstanding, leaves ample room in both cases for the admission of exceptions to that standard of propriety of conduct which is now current; but by no means, however, for such as ought in fairness to attach discredit to the principles themselves, or to their development among the body of the agents in the cause; and they may be safely attributed to the fragile nature of the vessels, in which that purifying power and faith was so wonderfully manifested.

One of the first objects against which this reforming spirit levelled its weapons, was the system of modern church establishments, and those numerous and manifest corruptions which existed among them, and to which their several adherents, from various motives, were so pertinaciously attached,—such of them, I mean, as did not embrace these new views. It was well said by one of the most enlightened and experienced among the first members of this Society, in reference to the brotherhood,—“We are not persons that have shot up out of the old root into another appearance, as one sect has done out of another, till many are come up one after another, the ground still remaining the same out of which they all grew; but that very ground has been shaken and is shaking, destroyed and destroying, removed and removing in us. And the root of Jesse has been made manifest in us, and we have been transplanted by the everlasting power of life, and a real change brought forth in us, out of [and separated from] that spirit in which the world lives and worships, into another spirit, into which nothing which is of this world can enter.”

An impression of this nature having taken deep hold, having indeed become a principle of action in the minds of the early Friends, we need not be surprised, that they made war in righteousness with what was corrupt everywhere; and they saw no inconsistency in judgment beginning at what was reputed to be “the house of God.” At one blow, therefore, under the conduct of their holy Commander, who promised to lead his followers by his Spirit into all truth, and doubtless both as regards their worship and their discipline, they levelled all distinctions of laity and clergy, so called; as having sprung up in and spread over the visible church, just in proportion as a worldly spirit took the place of that heavenly influence, under which it was first gathered.

That they had been brought to the effectual experience of this blessed influence, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” Friends gave infallible proof; and under it, as a gathered church, they met, sitting down together in the name of Christ, to wait, (each member in particular endeavouring to know its own place in the body,) for the springing up of that divine life, which could alone qualify any of them for the exercise of their several gifts. And there are many remarkable instances on record, of the tendering and refreshing operation of heavenly love and power, by which they were often abundantly

attended, and their hearts at such seasons knit and united together. There, Christ was all in all; and the hands or the head could not say to the feet, "We have no need of you;" but every member had his own responsible station and office in the body, whether of silent exercise or vocal communication, either prophecy, exhortation, prayer, or praise, for the instruction, edification, and comfort of the whole. This was truly primitive and apostolical.

If such a work had been undertaken in the wisdom or contrivance of man, or by mere imitation in a fanatic spirit, it would have been unmeaning, fruitless, and dead. But, as it was undertaken, it remains to be a pattern to future ages, in relation to the manner in which it has pleased the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls to visit his flock, and appear "in the midst of them," leading them forth out of the death and formality of an empty yet wordy profession, into the life and liberty of his own free Spirit. Not that all other professors were wholly without life, even at that period, as the writings of Friends most fully admit; but formality and an outside profession were leading features of those times: nor yet that the Life, in its immediate springing up, is at the present day very demonstratively seen in the Society in question. But the seed has been sown, the way has been cast up and made plain; and if the impressions, which were deeply stamped on the minds of its early and most devoted members, had the seal of Truth for their origin, notwithstanding appearances at present may not be the most promising, their testimony will not be lost.

In attempting to level a distinction so unscriptural as that of laity and clergy, Friends struck at the root of all lordliness in church government; at the system of compulsory exactions for religious purposes; and at such a ministry as, having man's appointment for its foundation, assumed to itself exclusive privileges under a stipendiary system. Such principles as are involved in these questions, have at length taken strong hold on the attention of a large portion of the community of the present day; and it behooves those who would be accounted spiritual, and who from conscientious motives are desirous of adding their weight in favour of such positions, to search diligently into the origin of those views, towards which the eyes of all parties are more or less directed; and which sooner or later must prevail, in the ordering of Divine Wisdom and Providence; promising to be productive of changes in the condition and circumstances of the church of our Redeemer, to which few can look forward with indifference. It therefore appears to be the more incumbent upon those, who on religious grounds are interested in such anticipations, with honesty and patience to examine the nature of their own foundation, and the superstructure which has been raised upon it; that they may ascertain for themselves, whether it is one with that, against which "the gates of hell" can never prevail;—whether it will stand the fiery trial which is to try every man's work;—in short, whether their faith is such as overcomes the world, and leads its possessor forth, often in a way most adverse to the will and wisdom of the creature;—a living faith, such as removes mountains, gives them the victory, and to which they can, as did the early Friends in an eminent degree, set their seal by suffering.

[The author of these pages, having thus briefly adverted to the settlement of the Society of Friends; as

an eminent instance of the display of Almighty goodness, wisdom, and power; and having glanced at one remarkable feature and effect attending their calling, namely, that they were raised up to bear testimony to the very Truth as it is in Jesus, and against all the innovation and degeneracy that had crept in and prevailed throughout professing Christendom; goes on to speak of the order of that building, and the government of that house, which they believed themselves called upon to erect and establish among those who were gathered into the same fellowship.¹—*Editor*.]

The origin, character, and objects of the discipline or order of church government, established in the Society of Friends, and which has been justly admired for its simplicity, as well for its consistency with, as for its adaptation to the nature and necessities of a Christian church, may be best introduced to the general reader by the following statement, extracted from their Rules of Discipline, recently published by the Yearly Meeting.

By the term discipline, we understand all those arrangements and regulations, which are instituted for the civil and religious benefit of a Christian church: the meetings of discipline are, of course, for the purpose of carrying those objects into effect. Their design was said by George Fox, to be—the promotion of charity and piety.

It cannot be said, that any system of discipline formed a part of the original compact of the Society. There was not indeed, to human appearance, anything systematic in its formation. It was an association of persons who were earnestly seeking, yes, panting after the saving knowledge of Divine Truth. They were men of prayer, and diligent searchers of the holy Scriptures: unable to find true rest in the various opinions and systems, which in that day divided the Christian world, they believed that they found the Truth, in a more full reception of Christ, not only as the living and ever present Head of the church in its aggregate capacity, but also as the Light and Life—the spiritual Ruler, Teacher, and Friend of every individual member.

These views did not lead them to the abandonment of those doctrines, which they had heretofore held in regard to the manhood of Christ, his propitiatory sacrifice, mediation, and intercession. They did lead them, however, to a less dependence upon man, and to much inward retirement and waiting upon God, that they might know his will, and become quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord; yet were they very frequent in their meetings together for mutual edification and instruction, for the purpose of united worship in Spirit and in Truth, and for the exercise of their several gifts, as ability might be afforded by Him, who has promised to be with the two or three disciples who are gathered together in his name.

From these meetings, in which the love of God was often largely shed abroad in the hearts of

¹ The Editor [John Barclay] is by no means clear, that this *Introductory Chapter* stands as the author would have let it go forth, had he been spared to complete it. It is quite an unfinished fragment of an essay. The interest of the reader will be increased on learning, that this was the very last effort of his pen; and that even on his sick bed, but a few days before his removal from here, he was engaged in penning some of these clear views relative to the state of the militant church, until the increase of fever rapidly overwhelmed the mental and bodily powers, and hurried him away, not unprepared, as it is fully believed, to join the church triumphant in heaven.

those who attended them, even when held in silence, [which was by no means infrequently the case even in the early times,] most of those ministers went forth, who in the earliest periods of the Society, proclaimed to others the Truth as they had found it, and called them from dependence on man, to that individual knowledge of Christ and of his teachings, which the holy Scriptures so clearly and abundantly declare to be the privilege of the Gospel times. As these views struck at the very root of that great corruption in the Christian church, by which one man's performances on behalf of others had been made essential to public worship, and on which hung all the load of ecclesiastical domination and the trade in holy things; so it necessarily separated those who had, as they believed, found the liberty of the Gospel, from those who still adhered with pious regard, or a mere ignorant and selfish attachment, to that system which was upheld by the existing churches of the land.

Being thus separated from others, and many being every day added to the church, there arose of course peculiar duties of the associated persons towards each other. Christianity has ever been a powerful, active, and beneficent principle. Those who truly receive it, no more "live unto themselves;" and this feature and fruit of genuine Christianity was strikingly exhibited in the conduct of the early Friends. No sooner were a few persons connected together in the new bond of religious fellowship, than they were engaged to admonish, encourage, and in spiritual as well as temporal matters, to watch over and help one another in love.

The members who lived near to each other, and who met together for religious worship, immediately formed, from the very law of their union, a Christian family or little church. Each member was at liberty to exercise the gift bestowed upon him, in that beautiful harmony and subjection which belongs to the several parts of a living body, from the analogy of which the apostle Paul draws so striking a description of the true church; "You are the body of Christ, and members individually."

Of this right exercise of spiritual gifts, and thereby of an efficient discipline, many examples are afforded in the history of the earliest period of the Society; we shall select one, which we believe may be considered as fairly illustrating the practice of early times.

Stephen Crisp in his Memoirs, speaking of his own state soon after his conviction, which was in 1655, and within a few years of the establishment of a meeting at Colchester, the place of his residence, thus expresses himself:

"The more I came to feel and perceive the love of God and his goodness to flow forth upon me, the more was I humbled and bowed in my mind to serve him, and to serve the least of his people among whom I walked. And as the word of wisdom began to spring in me, and the knowledge of God grew, so I became as a counsellor of them that were tempted in like manner as I had been; yet was kept so low, that I waited to receive counsel daily from God, and from those that were over me in the Lord, and were in Christ before me, against whom I never rebelled nor was stubborn; but the more I was kept in subjection myself, the more subject were evil spirits made to me, and the more I was enabled to help the weak and feeble ones. And the church of God in those days increased, and my care daily increased, and the weight of things relating both to the outward and inward condition of poor Friends came upon me; and being called of God and his people to take the care of the poor, and to relieve their necessities as I did see occasion, I did it faithfully for many years, with

diligence and much tenderness, exhorting and reproving any that were slothful, and encouraging them that were diligent, putting a difference according to the wisdom given me of God, and still minding my own state and condition, and seeking the honour that comes from God only.”²

Thus, then, we believe it may be safely asserted, that there never was a period in the Society, when those who agreed in religious principles were wholly independent of each other, or in which that order and subjection which may be said to constitute discipline, did not exist. But as the number of members increased, those mutual helps and guards, which had been, in great measure spontaneously afforded, were found to require some regular arrangements, for the preservation of order in the Church.

It was one of the earliest features of our religious economy, to elevate the character of the female sex, by recognizing them as helpers in spiritual as well as in temporal things; holding in the former, as well as in the latter, a distinct place, and having duties which more peculiarly devolved upon them. For this purpose, meetings were established among them, with a special regard to the care and edification of their own sex.

The history of these proceedings affords no small evidence, that the spirit of a sound mind influenced the body in its earliest periods: contending, as they did, for so large a measure of individual spiritual liberty, and placing the authority of man, in religious matters, in a position so subordinate to that of the one Great Head of the Church, they nevertheless recognised the importance and necessity of arrangements and of human instrumentality, under the direction of the Spirit of Christ; and they were led to establish a system of order at once so simple and efficient, that notwithstanding the varying circumstances of the Society, and the power of every annual meeting to alter it, it has been found in its main particulars, adapted to those changes, and it remains to this day essentially the same as it was within forty years of the rise of the Society.

The statement then proceeds to notice the origin and establishment of General and Quarterly meetings; which latter were county meetings, and “appear to have had much the same office in the body, as monthly meetings have now among us,” namely, the individual care and oversight of the members, and of the particular meetings composing them. The business of Quarterly Meetings now is, to watch over Monthly Meetings, to which the latter make report of their condition by representatives, in the same manner and with a similar relationship as the former do to the General or Yearly Meeting.

It appears to have been with our Society as it had been with the primitive church, that the care and provision for its poor members was among the earliest occasions of disciplinary arrangements. The occasion for this provision was much increased by the cruel persecutions and robberies to which, on their first rise, the Friends were almost everywhere exposed. It was no rare occurrence, at that period, for the father of a family to be thrown into a dungeon, and for the house to be spoiled of the very children’s beds and all their provisions. Nor was it uncommon, to seek their entire

² *Memoirs*. Stephen Crisp was an able minister of the Gospel among Friends in the early times. There is a volume of his collected writings, to which is prefixed a journal of his life; from that scarce volume has been compiled, by Samuel Tuke, one which is worthy of a place in every Christian man’s library.

proscription and ruin, by refusing to deal with them. Well may we say, with reverent thankfulness in reference to those times, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.”

The members of the persecuted Society were far from opulent; but they proved themselves rich in charity as well as in faith and hope: and the illustration of these virtues, by the sacrifices which they made for the relief of their more afflicted associates, and their unbroken constancy in the sufferings which they endured for the testimony of a good conscience, were doubtless among the practical arguments, which at length extorted the commendation even of their enemies.

A second, and perhaps contemporaneous object of the meetings for the discipline of the Society, was the obtaining redress for those illegally prosecuted or imprisoned. Though so patient in suffering, they deemed it their duty to apprise magistrates, judges, and the government, of illegal proceedings, and to use every legal and Christian effort to obtain redress. Several Friends in London devoted a large portion of time to this object; and regular statements of the most flagrant cases were sent to them, and were frequently laid by them before the king and government. Their constancy in suffering was hardly exceeded by their unwearied efforts to obtain relief for their suffering brethren, and for the alteration of the persecuting laws; and through these means, the cause of religious liberty was essentially promoted.

A third object, which at a very early period of the Society, pressed upon its attention, was the proper registration of births and deaths, and the provision for due proceedings relative to marriage. Their principles led them at once to reject all priestly intervention on these occasions; and hence there was a necessity for their having distinct arrangements in regard to them. In some of the meetings of earliest establishment, regular registers are preserved from the year 1650 to the present time. Great care was taken in regard to proceedings in marriage; investigation as to the clearness of the parties from other marriage engagements, full publicity of their intentions, and the consent of parents, appear to have been recommended in early times as preliminaries to the ratification of the agreement between the parties; and this act took place publicly in the religious meetings of the Society. Marriage has always been regarded by Friends, as a religious, not a mere civil compact.

The right education of youth, the provision of suitable situations for them as apprentices or otherwise, and the settlement of differences without going to law one with another, were also among the early objects of the Society’s care.

The last object of the discipline in early times, which we shall enumerate, was the exercise of spiritual care over the members. As the Society advanced, it was soon reminded of our Lord’s declaration: “It must needs be that offences come!” United as they were, in the main, in true Christian fellowship, differences did arise. Evidencing, as the Society did to a large extent, the fruits of the Spirit, there were those who fell away from their Christian profession, and walked disorderly;—and sound as was the body of Friends in Christian doctrine, there were members who were betrayed into false doctrines and vain imaginations;—and pure, and spiritual, and consistent with true order and Christian subjection, as were the principles of religious liberty advocated by the Society, there were those who appear to have assumed them under the false expectation of an entire independence.

To all these cases, the discipline was applied in very early times, yet the spirit of tenderness, which breathes through the writings of George Fox, in regard to the treatment of delinquents, and which there is good reason to believe was practically illustrated to a large extent in the conduct of the Friends of those days, is worthy of especial notice. In one of his epistles he thus writes:

“Now, concerning gospel order, though the doctrine of Jesus Christ requires his people to admonish a brother or sister twice, before they tell the church; yet that limits none, so as they shall use no longer forbearance. And it is desired of all, before they publicly complain, that they wait in the power of God, to feel if there is no more required of them to their brother or sister, before they expose him or her to the church. Let this be weightily considered; and all such as behold their brother or sister in a transgression, go not in a rough, light, or upbraiding spirit to reprove or admonish him or her; but in the power of the Lord and Spirit of the Lamb, and in the wisdom and love of the Truth, which suffers thereby, to admonish such an offender. So may the soul of such a brother or sister be seasonably and effectually reached unto and overcome, and they may have cause to bless the name of the Lord on their behalf; and so a blessing may be rewarded into the bosom of that faithful and tender brother or sister, who so admonished them. And so keep the church order of the gospel, according as the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded; that is, if your brother offends you, speak to him between you and him alone; and if he will not hear, take two or three; and if he will not hear two or three, then tell it to the church. And if any do miscarry, admonish them gently, in the wisdom of God, so that you may preserve him, and bring him to condemnation, and preserve him from further evils, which it is well if such do not run into; and it will be well for all to use the gentle wisdom of God towards them in their temptations, and condemnable actions; and with using gentleness, to bring them to condemn their evil, and to let their condemnation go as far as their bad action has gone and no further, to defile the minds of Friends or others; and so to clear God’s Truth and people, and to convert the soul to God, and preserve them out of further evils:—So be wise in the wisdom of God.”

Chapter I

Place of William Dewsbury’s Birth, Allerthorpe—Early religious impressions—Mental conflicts—Occupation, a Shepherd’s boy—Apprenticed—Illness, occasioned by conflict of mind—Unsuccessful in his search for consolation through the religious experience of high Professors.

Among the numerous memorials which have been preserved of the lives, labors, sufferings, and religious experience of the early members of the Society of Friends, and which lie scattered through many volumes of their writings, consulted in the present day to a limited extent only, few have appeared to me to deserve preservation more than those which relate to “that ancient, suffering servant of God and minister of Jesus Christ,” William Dewsbury.

This Friend was born at Allerthorpe, a village near Pocklington, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, early in the seventeenth century. I have not been able to discover with certainty the year of his birth, although his memorialist states, that he died in 1688, having lived to a good old age. His parents appear to have been religious persons: and no doubt were instrumental in cherishing that susceptibility of mind, which formed at an early age a striking feature in his character. His father died when the son was only eight years old; but, prone to reflection as he was, and not too young to be sensible of the loss he had thus sustained, the impression did not pass off so quickly as is usual with children. For while he was lamenting with tears over the solemn and affecting event, he heard what appeared to him a voice, which said, *“Weep for yourself, for your father is well.”* So powerful was the effect produced on his mind by this extraordinary incident, that from that time forward he spent many hours, which in childhood are usually devoted to play, in prayer and fasting, under a sense of his lost and undone condition.

It is not one of the least remarkable particulars in the life of William Dewsbury, as was also the case with some others of the early Friends, that almost in his very infancy, he was thus, by a power not his own nor at his own command, made deeply sensible of the depravity of our fallen estate. As he advanced in years, he became increasingly sensible of the corrupt propensities of his nature; and this was his condemnation, that he lived without the knowledge or the fear of God; and after many years’ reflection, he had to lament the transactions even of his childish days, although there is no reason to apprehend he exceeded the ordinary levity of young persons, or in his conduct went at all beyond what is commonly termed innocent at his age. In this manner, he was given to see the indispensable necessity of that change of heart, which in due time, by yielding obedience to the further manifestations of Divine light and grace upon his mind, was fully brought about to his inexpressible joy; and which, under the Gospel, is denominated a “being born again of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.”

The materials for composing a biographical memoir of this Friend, are very scanty, and by no means such as the weight of his character, and the importance and extent of his labors, would lead one to desire. In a memorial, however, which he wrote while in Northampton jail, in the year 1655, the particulars of which confinement will be hereafter related, he has left on record some interesting facts relative to his religious experience, extending to the time at which he was then writing. The tract in question was penned and circulated for general information, “To clear the truth from lies laid on it,” and “to stop the mouths of false accusers.” And as one of the charges brought against him, and on which he was committed to prison, was, that he taught the people there was no “original sin,” he introduces himself to his reader with the following language:—

I was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; and in that state I lived, delighting in pride and pleasure, in lightness and vanity, as all do, who are in that nature, until I was about eight years of age. Even before that time, the Light in my conscience did witness against me, and caused some trouble in me. But I departed from the light, and followed the counsel of my own heart; which led me into vanity, and to live without the fear of God. About the time when I was eight years of age, the word of the Lord came to me,—*“I created you for my glory;—an account you must give me*

for all your words and actions done in the body:’ which word enlightened my heart and opened in me the book of conscience, wherein was written all that I had done ever since I had had any remembrance. When I had read my condition, how I had lived without God, who had created me for his glory, the word of the Lord came unto me, ‘Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shakes it? As if the staff should shake itself against him that lifts it up, or the staff lift up itself as if it were no wood!’ And by the power of the word of the Lord that spoke in me, my understanding was enlightened, and my conscience bore witness that such was my condition. I had lifted up myself against the living God, in living without his fear, who created me to live in obedience to Him; I, on the contrary, had lived in disobedience until that day. Whereupon, deep sorrow seized on me, and I knew not what to do to get acquaintance with the God of my life.

That which I am now relating occurred between the ages of eight and thirteen; at which early period of his life, was exemplified the Scriptural truth, that it is sin which has made the separation between man and his God. Under these powerful impressions, William Dewsbury endeavored to alter the course of his life. He ceased from what he was now led to consider his vain conduct, in which he had hitherto lived; and became thoughtful and serious, far beyond his years. He began to read the Holy Scriptures and other books on religious subjects from his own choice, and at the same time to mourn and pray to God; although, as the account states, he had at that time received no clear understanding as to where He was to be found. It is evident, however, that the mind of this youth, under the quickening and heart-searching operations of divine grace, was wonderfully opened to the sight of his spiritual condition. With David, his soul was athirst for God, for the living God, and his cry, in effect was, “when shall I come and appear before God.” It was in vain, that he diligently availed himself of such opportunities as were afforded him, of learning, through the public teachers of religion and other outward means, what he was thus anxious to know and to enjoy in himself. For if his own mind had been sufficiently prepared for the reception of such knowledge, the outward and carnal views of that class of persons were not calculated to gratify his searching spirit. He describes them as viewing the Savior with regard only to his outward and visible appearance, wholly losing sight of that which is inward and spiritual, as abundantly set forth in the Holy Scriptures. When he inquired of these professors for Christ, whom beyond all things he desired to know, they told him his coming would be from heaven, meaning the firmament above us, and casting their eyes upwards, intimated in that significant way, to what point their own attention was directed. Thus, these ministers of the letter, failed in affording to the inquiring mind of the youthful Dewsbury, that instruction, which his soul was longing for; and the experience of many subsequent years proved to him beyond question, that such a knowledge of the Father and the Son as is life eternal, was not to be attained through such physicians of no value. His strict attention to outward observances, so often enforced by professors in an attempted imitation of the saints of old, but not in the same spirit and life, in fasting, prayer, and in various other particulars, as recorded of Peter, Cornelius, and others, were equally unsatisfactory to him. His soul was in trouble because of sin; and he found that no sacrifices which he could make, would avail to satisfy the Divine justice, or afford him peace. On the contrary, as a child of Adam, he had largely

to partake of the consequences of the transgression and fall of the parent of mankind, in a deep sense of the alienation from God, which, immediately following that event, descended upon his posterity. In the sentence of condemnation which Dewsbury now felt within him, and in the utter impossibility which he found, with all his endeavors, of working out his own peace, was opened to his understanding the mystery of the cherubim, placed at the east of the garden of Eden, and bearing a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life: by which sword, the righteous law of God, justice was executed upon the transgressing nature in him.

Until the thirteenth year of his age his occupation was chiefly that of a shepherd's boy, and Allerthorpe continued to be his home. This retired situation and way of life appear to have been very congenial with the state of his feelings; as it relieved him from the interruptions of company, and afforded him an opportunity of indulging in secret meditation, and in mourning and breathing after the saving knowledge of God. But soon after this period, when his relations were thinking of putting him apprentice, to learn some trade, he heard of a people called Puritans, near Leeds, thirty miles from the place of his birth, who were said to fear the Lord, and to walk with greater strictness of religious profession than many with whom he had been acquainted. Such was his hunger and thirst after righteousness, that he had no rest in his spirit, until his parents (his mother having I suppose married again) had succeeded in procuring a place there for him; not at all regarding the nature of his employment, "if," says he, "I might be among those who feared the living God; and thus become acquainted with the God of my life, who created me for himself."

He was accordingly bound apprentice to a cloth weaver at Holdbeck near Leeds, who proved to be a very sharp master: but the Lord enabled him with much patience to endure his trials, attended as they were by a considerable portion of ill health, until the period of his apprenticeship was nearly expired. In the meantime, he continued to use all diligence in seeking that knowledge for which his soul was greatly athirst, and for lack of which he suffered much distress of mind. He attended assiduously at the preaching of all the chief teachers of religion in the neighborhood, wrote down their sermons in short hand, and went afterwards to their houses to discourse with them, that if possible he might gain some satisfaction as to the subject of his anxiety. But in this he found himself disappointed; the result proving to him, that no outward profession of religion however high, no knowledge of Scripture however complete in itself, no attention to religious observances however strict, could ever cleanse the soul from sin, or restore it to a state of acceptance with God. "He lacked Christ," the chief of ten thousand, the beloved of souls, "and without him he could not live." The following are his own words. Speaking of this serious people in the district about Leeds, he says:—

There was, as had been reported, much speaking of God, called preaching, and professing him in words, from the letter of the Scripture, what the saints had spoken forth, thus imitating the saints' practice in a carnal wisdom, and seeking the kingdom of God in outward observations, as I had done before I came there. But I met with none who could tell me what God had done for

their souls, in redeeming them from the body of sin, which I groaned under, and which separated me from the presence of God. Although I walked strictly with them in their outward observations and in running to hear one man after another, called ministers, yet I found no rest nor peace to my weary soul. The flaming sword, the righteous law of God, cried in me for a perfect fulfilling of the law, and met me wherever I was; so that I could find no peace in that worship of God the world had set up,—such as receiving the bread and wine, which they told me were the seals of the covenant. It was long ere I dared to receive them, because I saw not myself prepared: for the evil of my heart stood before me. And when I was about to receive them, I sought the Lord to keep me by his power, that I might receive them worthily; and when I did receive them, my desire was that the Lord would seal up his will to my soul, but I found nothing sealed to my soul therewith. Then much fear seized upon me for a long time after; and the condition of Judas was cast into my mind; until it was showed me, that the seal of the covenant was the Spirit of Christ, and no outward element: and that the supper was the body and blood of Christ which the world does not know, nor did I at that time, but I was made to wait for the manifestation of it to me.”

“Then I dared join no more with the world in that practice; nor in singing David’s conditions, which they called singing psalms. For the light in my conscience let me see the evil of my heart, that I was not in David’s condition; the sense of which stopped my mouth: and while others were singing, I mourned and wept for lack of the pure spirit that David had, and which caused him to sing.”

“Neither was I able to apply the promises, which they told me belonged to me, for I found no promise belonging to that nature; but the wrath of God abode upon me, for my disobeying his counsel in me, the light in my conscience. But being ignorant that it was his counsel, I departed from it, and lent my ears to those who said they spoke from the mouth of the Lord; and I was deceived, and thus caused to err by their lies, who drew me to seek the kingdom of God in observations without. But the word of the kingdom was in me, and executed the righteous judgment of God upon my adulterous heart, that took counsel and not at his mouth.”

Under these exercises of mind, William Dewsbury’s health gave way, and he became so weak as to be unable with all his efforts, conscientiously exerted, to answer the expectations of his master; who, thinking him to be in a consumption, was inclined at one time to send him home to his relations; but on further reflection, he judged it to be more prudent to take medical advice. Dewsbury, however, being fully aware of the real cause of his malady, and rightly concluding that it was no other than the evil of his own heart, and the distress of mind there arising, resolutely declined employing such means for his relief, with a solitary exception, to avoid giving offense. And when, after diligent search among the Puritans, he was unable to find any who could apply a remedy to his spiritual malady, he was constrained to make his case known to such as were esteemed in the world as the most experienced ministers and professors; and to ask them what he might do to be saved. But they also proved to be physicians of no value; mere ministers of the letter. They told him to believe in the name of Christ, and to apply the promises; but to wait for “the revelation of Jesus Christ” in his own heart, they never counseled him; and it only added to his sorrow to be thus urged to believe in Christ, when neither he at that time, nor his advisers, knew where he was to be found, nor how believed in to the saving of the soul.

Chapter II

1642. Continuance of William Dewsbury's mental conflicts—In hopes of relief, enters the Parliament army—Disappointment—Goes to Edinburgh—He is inwardly instructed to leave the army—Returns home—His religious feelings and openings—He is shown the only true source of all saving knowledge and faith—Reflections—Remarks on immediate revelation.

These mysterious spiritual conflicts continued thus to exercise his mind for some years; and we are now brought down to the time of the civil wars, about the year 1642, when I suppose him to have been in his twenty-first year, and the term of his apprenticeship drawing towards a close. It was at this juncture, that William Dewsbury, in common with many ardent but well-meaning persons, fell into a snare, which the enemy of all righteousness, who was a murderer from the beginning, laid for them, through the plausible reasonings of some, who professed to be ministers of Christ. These persons raised the cry of "Curse you Meroz," because all were not so ready as they wished them to be, in unsheathing the sword in the cause of civil and religious liberty; which act they called, going up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. With this bait, placed in so inviting a point of view to him, William Dewsbury was taken; and his inducement to swallow it, was probably greater than that of some others, from the peculiar state of mind he was then passing through. His case was not dissimilar to that described in the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses of the sixth chapter of the Prophet Micah. He, like the individual there described, was ready to make any sacrifice for peace. He was willing to give his body unto death, in obedience to the Lord, if by such a measure it had been possible to free his soul from sin, escape the condemnation he then lay under, and thus attain to the knowledge of God. Therefore, not at that time seeing the inconsistency of the sword among Christians—of professing to be the servant of Christ, and at the same time acting in a manner diametrically opposed both to his example, his precept, and his Spirit; and not then remembering that Christ came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, he joined that little remnant, as he calls it, who entered into the Parliament army, and said they fought for the Gospel.

But, whichever way he turned himself at this period of his life, disappointment appears to have been the fruit of his labor. He entered the army under considerable expectation of meeting with fellow-travelers, whose main pursuit was one with his own, and whose minds had passed under similar baptisms. In this, however, he was deceived. He found as much ignorance of the Gospel in its real, its spiritual acceptation, and of Christ, the glad-tidings of the Gospel, as he had ever met with before. He therefore made a journey into Scotland, in search of those who there walked in the fear of the Lord; and came to Edinburgh, where, he tells us, he found nothing but formality; the teachers calling to people to seek the kingdom of God in outward observances. Wherefore he returned to England, and sought for Him whom his soul loved and longed for, among the Anabaptists and Independents. These, he tells us, "said, they were the children of God, and were setting up a more glorious image" in outward things. But he was not free to join them; for it was the testimony of the love of God to his soul, that he lacked and was in search of.

Then [says he,] the Lord discovered to me, that his love could not be attained to by anything I could do in any of these outward observations; and in all these turnings in my carnal wisdom, while seeking the kingdom of God without, there the flaming sword turned, to keep the way of the tree of life, fenced me from it, cut me down, rent all my coverings, and destroyed that mind which thus looked out to find the kingdom of heaven. Then, my mind was turned within by the power of the Lord, to wait in his counsel, the light in my conscience, to hear what the Lord would say. And the word of the Lord came to me, and said, ‘Put up your sword into its scabbard; if my kingdom were of this world then would my children fight: do you not know that if I needed, I could have twelve legions of angels from my Father?’ Which word enlightened my heart, and discovered the mystery of iniquity; it showed the kingdom of Christ to be within, and that its enemies being within and spiritual, my weapons against them should also be spiritual,—the power of God.

Favored with these clear and Scriptural intimations, of the will of the Lord concerning him, William Dewsbury no longer hesitated as to the course that it was right for him to pursue. And not feeling himself now at liberty to use the sword for the destruction of his fellow creatures, and that too under the mistaken notion of advancing the kingdom of Christ, (enthusiasm, indeed, of a most dangerous character!) he put up his weapon again into its sheath, and left the army. Having happily accomplished this resolution, he turned his steps homewards, and there labored at his previous occupation of cloth weaver, but, of his pursuits in trade he makes little or no mention, and we are left to conjecture both as to their extent, and his success and prosperity in regard to them. He informs us, however, that his mind was inwardly engaged, while laboring with his hands, in waiting on the Lord in the way of his judgments, until his own will was brought into subjection to the will of the Lord. Many Scripture types were from time to time opened to his understanding, greatly to his own instruction; chiefly those which in the characters of Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Egypt, etc. set forth the condemnation that the man of sin is under, showing how the carnal mind is not, neither can be, subject to the law of God. Under an inward sense and feeling that he was himself by nature involved in the same condemnation, he was brought to the determination of unreservedly casting himself upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and of yielding all up to His disposal, whatever that might be, whether to condemn or to save him; if the former should be consistent with the divine will, he could but acknowledge, that it would be just; if the latter, it was of his free love.

About this time also it appears from some hints he has left on record, that William Dewsbury received, greatly to his encouragement, a satisfactory and clear insight into the nature of the several dispensations of divine mercy to mankind, beginning at Adam, and passing through the administration of Moses to that of John; but, in what exact particulars, he does not very plainly state. However, the result was, that while he lay in the “condemned estate” before mentioned, bewailing himself in the depth of his misery, without any hope of deliverance by anything he could do to pacify the wrath of God; he was favored with a clear evidence in the secret of his soul, that there was free redemption laid up for him in the Lord Jesus, and encouragement was ministered even in this condemned state, to wait for His coming, who “in the appointed time of the Father,” says he, “appeared to my soul, as the lightnings from the east to the west, and my dead soul heard his voice, and by his voice was made to live, who created me to a living hope,

and sealed me up in the everlasting covenant of life with his blood. Then I witnessed the wages of sin to be death, and the gift of God eternal life through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Death reigns over all from Adam to Moses, and there is no rest to the soul, till Christ be manifested,—this the Scriptures witness; and I witness these Scriptures to be fulfilled in me.”

Before I proceed with the narrative, it may possibly be advantageous to pause for a short time, for the purpose of making a few reflections, suggested by that portion of it which is now before the reader. The experienced Christian will readily find some understanding and relish of these passages presented to him, which to other readers may be enveloped in a degree of obscurity. Those who have passed through religious exercises of a similar tendency with those of William Dewsbury, will have little or no difficulty in reconciling such parts of his experience, which, though they may not run in all respects parallel with their own, are not the less instructive, and Scriptural, and true. The foundation which was from the first laid in his mind for the necessity of the great work of regeneration, by that deep sense of the depravity and sinfulness of man, is especially worthy of our notice; coupled as it is with the important fact, that he learned this truth, as to his own particular, from those powerful and deep impressions secretly made upon his mind, without the intervention of the ordinary means of religious instruction. Of this fact, he never appears to have entertained a doubt; nor do I apprehend that it would be consistent with sound experience to question it. In the succeeding pages the reader will be furnished, I trust, with ample reason for concluding, that those evidences of immediate communication to his mind, which he esteemed to be divine, and under which his faith was exercised from first to last, fully warranted the strong language which he mostly employed, in describing his views of the work of God on the soul, and in conveying religious counsel, whether reference be made to his early days or to the more advanced periods of his career.

For thus conveying their own experience with regard to inward, immediate revelation, Friends were subjected to a load of unjust censure, and the floodgates of controversy were opened upon them from almost every quarter, exposing them to unmerited ridicule and abuse. Many, even in this day, entertain mistaken notions as to the views of the Society of Friends on this point, which have led to the supposition, that the doctrine is unsupported either by Scripture or by facts. They however assert it to be founded on both: and what their belief really is, may be stated without fear of contradiction from those, who have been spiritually instructed in divine things. For in the progress of the work of regeneration, which is not less a real and effectual, than an inward and mysterious work, an understanding is given, in and by which the “new creature” is enabled to receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Not however in their own wills, and at all times when they sit down to search the Holy Scriptures; but as those writings are opened to the mind and brought to their remembrance, by Him who knows their state of growth, what it stands in need of, and what it is able to bear.

It was in this way, as they were found walking in the obedience of faith, that such men as William Dewsbury and many among the early Friends, became well instructed in the things of God. They found it

needful for them to lay aside all their attempts to acquire religious knowledge, by the ordinary cultivation of their reasoning faculties alone. They had no liberty to heap up their stores, even of Scriptural knowledge, according to the common practice of others; on the contrary, in various instances, they found it to be required of them, to renounce the knowledge they had so gained, to unlearn Scripture as they had previously been taught it, and to wait, in great self-abasement as at the feet of Jesus, which they did patiently and diligently, to receive such an understanding as the natural man does not possess, and in which alone, spiritual things, as handed to us in the Sacred Volume, can be rightly comprehended.

These views however did not prevent Fox, Penn, Penington, Dewsbury and the body of Friends in the early times, from placing an equally high value on the holy Scriptures with their contemporaries. They received these writings, no less than the high professors of their day, as “given by inspiration of God,” and profitable to those ends for which they were designed, namely, “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” And they believed them “able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus.” But faith, in this sense, is a very comprehensive term. Thus, William Dewsbury, in reply to one who was his opponent in a controversial pamphlet, says, “For the sake of the simple, we do declare that which is witnessed by all the children of light,—that the word of faith is in the heart and in the mouth, and those who are guided by it, are kept pure. Faith purifies the heart, whether they have the outward declaration, yes or no. And those who have the outward declaration, though they read it, if they mind not the Word which is life and light, which gave forth the Scriptures, do not live according to the Scriptures; for they who are not guided by the Word, are without faith. Faith comes not by a bare reading of the outward declaration; but is the gift of God to his children, who diligently hearken to his Word, which is life, and the life is the light of men.” Again, “None come to the knowledge of the Father by reading the Scriptures, if they come not to Christ, of whom they testify, and in whom the life is;” who says, “Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternal life, and they are they which testify of ME;” and he reproves all those, who will not come to Him that they may have life. Again, “The Scripture is a true testimony of Him, who is the way to the Father. ‘None knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son reveals him.’ Christ we own, who was before the Scriptures, and is the authority of them; for when he spoke them forth, he spoke as one having authority, and according as Christ speaks of the Scriptures, we own them in their place, a true testimony of Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him.”

The preceding statement of doctrine, taken in conjunction with such practical results, as the reader will meet with in the course of these pages, will I trust convey a clear and correct idea of what the Society of Friends understand, when they assert the continuance of inward, immediate revelation. I will therefore proceed without further delay to the subjects of another chapter.

Chapter III

1646. William Dewsbury's inclination to preach—He is admonished to wait until 1652—Further spiritual exercises—His declaration respecting the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, its power and efficacy in his own case—Remarks on William Dewsbury's qualification for the ministry.

By this time, 1646, William Dewsbury, having experienced in himself the efficacy of the one saving baptism, had begun to feel a strong engagement of mind, inclining him to declare to others what the Lord had done for his soul; and was, in fact, freely given up to proceed at once, when and as the Lord should order him, upon the work of a preacher of the Gospel. It however appears clear, that he had not then received the necessary commission, which was to be communicated in due time. For, as he was revolving the subject in his thoughts, it is a circumstance no less remarkable than some which have been already related, that, by the influence of the holy Spirit upon his understanding, he was commanded to stay until the year 1652. This lively impression was accompanied by a prophetic intimation, that, at the time appointed, there would be more hungering and thirsting raised in the hearts of people after the Lord, than was then the case. In the obedience of faith, following these directions, the nature of which he had by this time learned, he continued for several years in the pursuit of his trade. He also held religious meetings in his own house, and in the neighborhood where he was situated, until the appointed time arrived. Meanwhile, it does not appear, from information which has come down to us, that he was in the practice of exercising any vocal gift, either at the said meetings or elsewhere.

While, however, in this state of suspense and dependence, as he informs us, and before he was known to George Fox, he had to pass through various conflicts of mind, and was deeply proved, for the trial of his faith, which he had received of the Lord Jesus. All this, no doubt, tended more fully to prepare him for the great work and service, to which he was appointed. The following are his own words on this point of his history.

In that day and hour of temptation, I witnessed those Scriptures fulfilled in me, of Paul's condition, wherein he complained as I then did. I found a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, so that when I would do good, evil was present with me; the sense of which caused me to cry, 'Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And as I was crying to the Lord, to free me from the burden I groaned under; the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'My grace is sufficient for you, I will deliver you.' And by the power of this word, I was armed with patience to wait in his counsel; groaning under the body of sin in the day and hour of temptation, until it pleased the Lord to manifest his power to free me, which was in the year 1651.

Thus through the righteous law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, I was and am made free from the body of sin and death; and through these great tribulations, my garments are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, who has led me into the new Jerusalem, where nothing enters that

works abomination or makes a lie, but that which is written in the Lamb's book of life. Here my soul now feeds upon the tree of life, which I had so long hungered and thirsted after, that stands in the paradise of God. Here there is no more curse nor night; but the Lord God and the Lamb are my light and life forever and ever! And I witness that I am regenerated and born again of the immortal seed, and having partaken of the first resurrection, over such the second death has no power.

And this I declare to all the inhabitants of England, and to all that dwell upon the earth, that God alone is the teacher of his people. He has given to every one a measure of grace, which is the light that comes from Christ. It checks and reproves for sin, in the secret of the heart and conscience. All who wait in that light, which comes from Christ, and which is the free grace of God, for the power of Jesus Christ to destroy sin and to guide them in obedience to the light, shall come to know the only true God and Father of light in Christ Jesus, who is the way to him. And this I witness to all the sons of men, that I came not to the knowledge of eternal life by the letter of the Scripture, nor by hearing men speak of the name of God. I came to the true knowledge of the Scriptures and the eternal rest which they testify of in Christ, by the inspiration of the spirit of Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah, who alone is found worthy to open the seals of the book.

The testimony, from which the foregoing narrative of his spiritual progress is chiefly taken, was written, as before stated, from Northampton jail in the year 1655, after he found himself united to a people whom the Lord had raised up. To these, his friends in Christ, he thus impressively addresses himself at the close of the above piece.—

Dear Friends,

Whose minds are turned to the effectual light that comes from Christ, all mind your own measure, and be content in what the Lord has committed to you. With the light, judge that which would draw your minds to look forth at others' conditions, and in impatience to covet what the Lord has given to them, before it is manifest to you. Be faithful every one in your own measure, and in patience wait for the unlimited spirit of Christ, your life, to open the seals of the book, and make known unto you the mystery of eternal life. This he will daily reveal in you that are faithful in your own measures, to follow the Lord in what he makes manifest to you, whom he has called into his vineyard at the ninth and eleventh hours. Be faithful to the Lord, in walking in obedience to him in the light. He will make a short work in the earth for his Seed's sake, and your reward shall be rest and peace in the presence of God in Christ, with those who came into the vineyard at the third and sixth hours, and labored in the heat of the day. God Almighty be with you, his chosen servants and children; and all in your measure keep in his power, bold, valiant, and faithful unto the end, and [he will] crown you with eternal glory in Christ, our Judge, Lord, and King; God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

The reader will now feel himself under no difficulty in forming a judgment, both as to the view of Christian doctrine, and the degree of religious experience, with which William Dewsbury entered upon the important and arduous service of a minister of the Gospel. It is evident that his fitness for such an office depended not on education or artificial attainments; on the peculiar bent of his mind, or the force

of his genius, but on the preparation the whole man had undergone, while he lay as clay upon the wheel of the Great Potter. Having, in that condition, fully known in himself the utter impossibility of attaining to peace with his Creator, so as to enjoy communion with him, without the mediation of a Savior, who as advocate with the Father, could plead his own most precious blood as the price paid for the ransom of souls; and impressed with the high importance of obtaining the possession of the good things thus provided, which are variously set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and in testimony to the real enjoyment of which, they afford so great a cloud of witnesses; he was indefatigable in the pursuit of this one great object. Christ! Christ! was the incessant cry in the secret of his soul: Christ the bread of life, the fountain of living waters! It was not enough for him to be told, even in the language of Holy Writ, that Christ was his Savior and Redeemer,—that he had tasted death for every man,—that he is the propitiation for the sins of all,—that he was manifested to take away our sins,—and that he had actually borne our sins in his own body on the tree; —he could see there was no inheritance of the promise for the first birth, that corrupt nature which attaches to Adam and all his children in the fall, under which he groaned, and out of which he saw that Christ the Deliverer came to redeem us, and to set us free. In consistency with this view, and deeply sensible of another Gospel truth, too little accepted in its real and full import, that “unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,”—he could take no comfort to himself short of a sensible evidence, ministered to and received in that faith, which is “the substance of things hoped for,” that this work of righteousness was measurably brought about and making progress in his soul.

When, at length, this was felt to be the case, which was not until after an intense struggling of corrupt nature, the carnal mind, to preserve its own life, he was the more encouraged to wait in the light which had manifested his real condition. This he found to be no deceiver; it never flattered his conscience into a delusive slumber, under the false apprehension, that to believe in the outward testimony respecting Christ, to rely upon his merits, and to take up with the form of a holy life, without feeling the powerful virtue of his spirit, was sufficient, or would make him one of the redeemed of the Lord. He therefore waited, under a deep and obedient attention, for the further unfoldings of this divine light, which, in his experience, he found to be no other, than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is nothing however in these views, that will warrant an apprehension, that William Dewsbury set a low value on any branch of Christian doctrine, especially that of the price paid for the ransom of souls. On the contrary, we have already seen, that there is every reason for concluding, he felt with more than an ordinary conviction, the full force of those passages of Holy Scripture, which most plainly set forth the one great offering for sin. But, although he arrived at the clear and unquestionable evidence in his own mind, that remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ was and is to be preached everywhere, yet, with equal truth to support him in the conclusion, he was constrained to bear witness, that none can become partakers of the benefits of Christ’s death, but as they are leavened into a measure of his life; which takes place in the obedient mind, consistently with the testimony of John in his first epistle, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

There can be no doubt, that the reason why so many professors of the Christian name experience this cleansing but in part, and therefore reject the doctrine of perfection,—a perfect cleansing and a perfecting of holiness—is, because this doctrine, which includes the daily bearing of the cross, and the denial of self in all its deceitful workings, is so much lost sight of. This, William Dewsbury, in common with the early Friends, not to the exception of many at the present day, clearly saw: and I believe there is a conviction of this truth on the minds of many persons, who are not yet fully entered into that rest which is prepared for the people of God. On this ground, it was the constant endeavor of this Friend, and the burden of his mind, to direct people, in the exercise of his ministerial gift, whether by word or writing, to the one only way by which man can become a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. He knew well, not as one who looked only into the perfect law of liberty, but as one who continued therein, and was a doer of the work,—that obedience to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is the indispensable condition of discipleship. And, not daring to limit, as the reasoning mind is so apt to do, the Spirit of the Lord, he knew that no required sacrifice of the corrupt will or inclinations of the mind, however unaccountable to the creature, in relation to its nature or magnitude, could be rejected, without obstructing the work of righteousness and entailing the forfeiture of peace: because it was not new for the foolish things to become the means of confounding those which are esteemed wise in this world, nor for the weak things to be employed to bring down the things that are mighty. Of this William Dewsbury and the early Friends had large experience.

Thus prepared, and having first received a gift, and a distinct call to the work, he went forth as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, being enabled from his own knowledge of the word of Eternal Life, to report to others how great things the Lord had done for his soul; and the succeeding portion of our narrative, will become the best comment on the degree of his qualification for this solemn engagement.

Chapter IV

1649. His marriage—His faith proved—Assurance of support granted him—George Fox and he meet and unite—Is called to and enters upon the ministry—Previous prediction—Thomas Thompson's testimonial of him as a powerful minister.

William Dewsbury appears to have entered into the marriage covenant at an early period of his life; and although I have not succeeded in meeting with many particulars relative to this event, from the best calculation I have been able to make, I suppose it to have occurred about the twenty-sixth year of his age, two or three years earlier than the date 1649, at which we have now arrived. The facts which have come before me on this subject, may be related as follows.

Some time after William Dewsbury had entered into the army, he heard accidentally of a young woman of York, who, like himself, had suffered greatly from sorrow and distress concerning the state of her immortal soul; so much so, that, as he was given to understand, she was ready to despair of the Lord's mercy. After due deliberation, it having arisen in his heart to pay her a visit, he concluded to do so, and went. In the course of conversation, they came to understand each other's spiritual condition, which proved to be very similar, they having passed through the like exercises, so that they found themselves nearly united in mind and judgment, "as in water face answers to face." They parted. The narrative goes on to state, that some time after this, William Dewsbury married, but fails in informing us, whether the young woman in question was actually the object of his choice. But, as the circumstances are related so closely in connection with each other, and the marriage ceremony took place at York, we may with some safety conclude in the affirmative. The union was accomplished at a meeting of the Anabaptists, with whom the young woman was associated in religious profession. It is related to have been a season of divine regard; their children, who are the historians in this instance, having often heard their father say, that the hearts of those who attended the ceremony were so overcome by a sense of the Divine presence, that there were but few dry eyes in the room.

A circumstance, which immediately followed this interesting event, and which proved a close trial of his faith, seems to show, that when he took this important step his outward circumstances were by no means affluent. His wife appears to have been a woman of considerable property in land, of which she was unjustly deprived by her brother. And although everything is said to have been clear respecting the proceedings, and the case was submitted to trial, yet the decision was against him,—the judge would not let him have the property. As he was going home he met with the buffetings of the enemy, who insinuated into his mind some misgivings for having married a well-bred woman, whom he was now likely to bring to poverty. In humiliation and lowliness of mind before the Lord, without yielding to the tempter, he desired the Lord to make him content to be what he would have him to be; and, in a moment, he was so filled with the presence of the Lord, that he was not able to bear the weight of the glory that was upon him; and he desired the Lord, if he had any service for him to do, to withdraw, or he could not live; and he heard as it were a voice say, "You are mine, all in heaven and in earth is mine, and it is yours in me; what I see good I will give unto you, and unto your wife and children."

Where he settled upon this consummation of his wishes, does not appear; but in 1655, when brought before Judge Hale, as will be related hereafter, his residence was at Wakefield, and he then had a family of three children.

It was in the year 1651, that William Dewsbury first met that eminent minister and servant of Christ, George Fox, who may be said to have been the chief instrument in gathering the Society of Friends.

The first interview which took place between them, occurred at the house of lieutenant Roper, at Synderhill Green, near Balby in Yorkshire, where George Fox was holding meetings, soon after his liberation out

of the dungeon of Derby jail. There he had been cruelly and most unjustly confined for six months, and for the previous six months in the house of correction: in all twelve months close imprisonment. He had however by that time been so successful in his preaching, as to make many converts to his doctrine; and from Derby, after his discharge, he passed through numerous places in the adjacent counties, visiting his friends, and preaching repentance and the word of life to the people; and many more were convinced. Coming to Balby, where several of his friends resided, William and Ann Dewsbury heard him preach at lieutenant Roper's; where he was also met by Thomas Goodaire, James Nayler, Richard Farnsworth, and others.

“At an evening meeting there,” says George Fox, “William Dewsbury and his wife came and heard me declare the Truth. And after the meeting, it being a moonlight night, I walked out into the field: and William Dewsbury and his wife came to me into the field, and confessed to the Truth and received it; and after some time, he did testify to it.” At the same time, I apprehend, we are not to understand from this, that George Fox had much, if any thing, to do with bringing over these Friends to the principles which he preached; because the husband, at least, was of the same belief before they met; of which possibly George Fox, when he wrote his account, was not fully aware. The interview may be said to have afforded the parties an opportunity of ascertaining the grounds of true fellowship. For it is clear that William Dewsbury had been previously instructed in the same school, and by the same Divine Teacher. Sewel informs us that “he was one of those who had already been immediately convinced, as George Fox himself was; who, coming to him found himself in unity with him.”

The time was now approaching, for William Dewsbury to enter upon more active and public duties; he had for a period perhaps of six years been living in the seclusion of domestic life. He had married, had become a father, and there was every reason why he should be desirous of “providing things” needful and “honest in the sight of all men.” With regard to his call to the work of the ministry, there is no reason to believe that he received any commission on that behalf until the latter part of 1652.

I waited [he says,] in the counsel of my God, in the calling where I was placed, until the year 1652. And in the eighth month of the year, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, ‘The leaders of my people cause them to err, in drawing them from the light in their consciences, the anointing within, which the Father has sent to be their Teacher, and would lead them into all truth, to seek the kingdom of God in observations, where it is not to be found. So my people perish for lack of bread: freely you has received, freely give and minister: and what I have made known unto you in secret, declare you openly.’—Which word constrained me, by the power of it, to leave my wife and children, and to run to and fro to declare to souls, where their Teacher is, the Light in their consciences: of which the Lord has given to every one a measure to profit withal, for the exercise of the conscience towards God and men. Waiting in the light for the power of Christ, he would lead them up to the living fountains of waters, where their souls would find refreshment in the presence of the Lord; and their bread would be sure, and their water never fail,—as the Lord has made manifest to my soul.

It will no doubt be remembered, that when William Dewsbury was commanded, as already related, to delay his entering upon the work of the ministry until 1652, the reason assigned to him was, that at that time, there would be a greater hungering and thirsting in the hearts of the people after the Lord. That this was really the case, may be in part concluded from the fact, of the great success which had attended the ministry of George Fox and other Friends, who had begun, some time previous to that date, as ministers of the Gospel, to exercise their several gifts. As early as 1647 the doctrines of Friends began to be spread through Leicestershire, George Fox's native county, and by the year 1648 through Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and the adjacent counties; in Yorkshire in 1651, the date of George Fox and William Dewsbury's first interview; in Lancashire and Westmoreland in 1652; in Cumberland, Northumberland, etc. in 1653; and in London and most parts of the united kingdom in 1654. John Whiting, in reference to the city of London, at the date last mentioned, which was the first year that James Nayler and others visited it, says, "There was much running to and fro, and an increase of knowledge, and a thirsting in many thousands, for the breaking forth of the day of salvation and fulfilling of the promises."

It is an interesting circumstance, that I am able to lay before the reader, so early a testimonial of the power and efficacy of William Dewsbury's ministry, as we are furnished with under the hand of Thomas Thompson, who was one of his first converts, and who soon became, as the account goes on to state, a minister of the same word. The circumstance is related as follows:—

Now it came to pass about the sixth or seventh month of the year 1652, we heard of a people raised up at or about Malton, who were called Quakers, which was the first time I heard of that name being given to any people. They were by most people spoken against; but when I strictly inquired what they had to lay to their charge, that might give cause for such aspersions as were thrown upon them, I met with none that could justly accuse them of any crime; only they said they were fantastical and conceited, and burnt their lace and ribbons, and other superfluous things, which formerly they used to wear; and that they fell into strange fits of quaking and trembling.—These reports increased my desires to see, and be acquainted with some of them; and in the eighth month of the aforesaid year, I heard that the Quakers were come to Bridlington, whereat I greatly rejoiced in my spirit, hoping that I should get some opportunity to see them. This was that faithful laborer and minister of the Gospel, William Dewsbury, who then was ordered into these parts; and on the fifth-day following I heard that they were come to Frodingham. Being on my master's work in Brigham, I could not go in the day, but determined to go in the night, and would gladly have had some of my acquaintance to go with me; but the night being very dark, none would go, so I went alone. Coming into the room where William was, I found him writing, and the rest of his company sitting in silence, seeming to be much retired in mind, and fixed towards God; their countenances being grave and solid, preached unto me, and confirmed what I had before believed, that they were the people of the Lord. After a little time, William ceased writing, and many of the town's people coming in, he began in the power and wisdom of God to declare the Truth. And, O! how was my soul refreshed, and the witness of God reached in my heart! I cannot express it with pen; I had never heard nor felt the like before; for he spoke as one having authority, and not as the

scribes; so that if all the world said no, I could have given my testimony, that it was the everlasting Truth of God.

In the same month, my mouth was livingly opened to declare the name of the Lord, and preach repentance to the people; and the work of the Lord prospered in the hands of his faithful servants. I knew a bridle to my tongue, and was greatly afraid lest I should offend the Lord, in thought, word, or deed: and the word of the Lord was in me—‘You shall not do your own works, nor think your own thoughts, nor speak your own words on this my holy day.’ And though I suffered and went through many great exercises, yet the Lord bore up my spirit, and carried me on, while I abode faithful to him, to the praise of his own name. But through reasonings, and looking too much at my own inabilities and unfitness for so weighty a work, the enemy sometimes prevailed to keep me in disobedience, and cast down my mind so low, that my growth was thereby hindered for a time; yet did the Lord, in his endless love to my poor soul, renew his visitations, and my mouth was often opened in the congregations of his people, to praise his worthy name. In those days I often accompanied William Dewsbury, John Whitehead, and sometimes James Nayler, and other early ministers, to and fro in the East Riding of Yorkshire; and the glorious presence and power of the Lord our God was richly with us, to the overcoming of our souls, the comfort of his heritage, and the praise of his own name.

The circumstances above related, appear to have occurred in part, at the period immediately preceding that which has just been noticed as William Dewsbury’s first journey into the north-western counties.

Chapter V

1652-3. William Dewsbury’s first journey—Suffers abuse with other Friends—Is almost killed at Sedbergh—Occurrences there—Epistle on Church Discipline.

It is uncertain whether William Dewsbury had settled with his family at Wakefield as early as the year 1652, or continued for a few years after his marriage at Allerthorpe. But as Brigham and Frodingham, the scene of occurrences mentioned by Thomas Thompson, at the close of the preceding chapter, are neighboring villages to the latter place, the probability seems on the side of this conclusion; and the more so as no mention is made of Wakefield until the year 1655, when it had become the place of his residence. His first journey on a religious account as a minister, beyond this vicinity, appears to have been in the latter months of the year 1652, when he traveled into Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire; and shared the common lot of other Friends in those days, who were subjected to great sufferings for the truth’s sake. Our early Friends believed themselves required of the Lord, at times to bear their testimony boldly against an unscriptural ministry and its fruits, in the public national places of worship. The following statement of facts from the pen of George Fox, in which William Dewsbury’s name occurs

among others, will give but a faint idea of the cruelty, the abuse, and the persecution Friends at that time endured from this cause. He says:—

After I was set at liberty (that is, from Carlisle jail,—a memorable instance of the triumph of truth over wickedness, cruelty and falsehood,) I went to Thomas Bewley's, where there came a Baptist teacher to oppose me; and he was convinced. Robert Widders, who was with me, was moved to go to Coldbeck steeple-house; and the Baptist teacher went along with him the same day. The people fell upon them, and almost killed Robert Widders! They took the Baptist's sword from him, and beat him sorely. This Baptist had the inheritance of an impropriation of tithes, and he went home and gave it up freely. Robert Widders was sent to Carlisle jail; where having lain awhile, he was set at liberty again. William Dewsbury also went to another steeple-house, hard by; and the people almost killed him, they beat him so. But the Lord's power was over all, and healed them again. At that day many Friends went to the steeple-houses, to declare the truth to the priests and people, and great sufferings they underwent; but the Lord's power sustained them.

It was in the course of this journey, of which no further particulars have been preserved, that he was at Sedbergh, as we are informed by George Whitehead; an eminent minister, a voluminous writer in the controversies of those days, and a zealous and diligent fellow-laborer with George Fox, William Penn, and others. He tells us, that at Sedbergh in Yorkshire, on a market day, about the year 1653, as William Dewsbury was publishing the truth at the market-cross, and warning the people to turn from the evil of their ways to the grace of God, the light of Christ in their consciences, some rude persons endeavored with violence to push him down. And setting their backs against the high stone cross, not aware most likely of its tottering condition, with their hands against him, the cross gave way, and in its fall broke in pieces. George Whitehead was at this time about sixteen years of age, having been himself convinced of the truth of the doctrines preached by Friends about a year before; and he relates this occurrence as one which was noticed at the time as a remarkable instance of the special providence of God attending William Dewsbury in his labors; for notwithstanding the multitude of people collected to hear him, not one was killed or even injured by the accident.

The numbers who attached themselves to the new Society, being now rapidly on the increase, it appears from the tenor of William Dewsbury's early epistles, that circumstances soon arose among the first converts to the doctrines preached by him and his fellows, which proved the necessity of some kind of discipline for the mutual help of the members, for the preservation of unity and good order in the churches, and for the establishment of meetings, as the truth spread over new districts. The two following addresses may serve, the one to illustrate the fact, and the other to point out the manner in which he was led to supply this need. The latter of the two only, is in his collected works, where it stands the first in order of his epistles, having the date of 1653. It contains, I apprehend, the first outline on record of an attempt at a system of religious discipline among Friends; and it shows some considerable analogy to that which was many years afterwards introduced by George Fox in a form much amplified, and which has continued in operation in the Society to the present day. In the introduction to the new edition of the

Rules of Discipline of the religious Society of Friends with Advices, I find the following statement, which bears directly on this point, and gives countenance to the supposition which I had entertained in regard to the epistle in question.—

Previously to the establishment of that regular system of discipline, and of that mode of representation in the meetings for conducting it, which now exists, there had been many general meetings held in different parts of the nation, for the purpose of providing for the various exigencies of the Society. How these meetings were constituted, it is not easy to ascertain. The laborers in the Gospel, by whose instrumentality the church had been gathered, appear to have taken the most prominent part in the proceedings of these meetings.

George Fox mentions in his Journal, that some meetings for discipline were settled in the north of England so early as the year 1653. The first general meeting of which we are aware that any records are extant, was held at Balby, near Doncaster, in Yorkshire, in 1656; and from this meeting a number of directions and advices were issued, addressed ‘To the Brethren in the North.’ This document refers to most of the points, which now form the main subjects of our discipline. It contains instructions as to the Gospel order of proceeding with delinquents, advices to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, as to the discharge of their relative duties, and also in regard to strict justice in trade, and a cheerful and faithful performance of civil offices in the commonwealth. P. xviii.

Such being the result of an examination made into the origin of our discipline, I conclude that those who have considered the subject, will agree with me in attributing to the writer of the following epistle, the credit of having made the first suggestions on that subject.¹

The prefatory address will show the high authority under which William Dewsbury believed himself to be moving on this occasion. It is as follows:

This is the word of the living God to his church that he has called and chosen out of the world, to place his name in, to order and guide in his pure wisdom to his praise and glory, who alone is worthy, God over all, blessed forever.

That in every particular meeting of Friends, there be chosen from among you, one or two who are most grown in the power and life, and in discernment in the truth, to take the care and charge over the flock of God in that place. And this is the word of the living God to you who are chosen:—‘Watch over the flock of God,’ you to whom is committed the charge and care; and take the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind. I charge and command you in the presence of the living God, not to rule as lords over God’s heritage, but in the power of the Spirit in all purity. Be examples to the flock, and see that

¹ The Editor has seen the original in William Dewsbury’s handwriting: it was evidently sent to George Fox, and received his signature, *after* that of William Dewsbury, and is endorsed in George Fox’s handwriting, *William Dewsbury to Friends*.

order be kept in the church, in constantly meeting together, according to the rule that has been given forth, that is to say, once a week, or more, if it may be, besides the first-day meeting. And you are to have a general meeting with other Friends near you, once in two or three weeks, as the Lord orders and makes way.

Be not slack and backward, but faithful to the Lord, in improving every opportunity for Friends to meet; and, in every town where Friends are scattered, lay the charge and care on some Friends who are most grown in the truth, to see that they meet together to wait on the Lord three or four hours, as the Lord orders it, one night or two in the week. And watch over one another with a pure, single eye, to see that those who come among them walk orderly, according to what they profess. And if any walk disorderly, let those to whom the care and charge is committed, or any other who discerns them, and is moved to speak to them, deal plainly with them in reproofing them, ministering to that which is pure in the conscience, for the restoring of them. But, if they will not reform, acquaint two or three more who are most grown in the truth; or you to whom the charge and care of the flock is committed, with the other that did admonish them in tender love, admonish them again; and, with plainness of speech, minister to that which is pure in their consciences, to raise up the witness and to judge and cut down the deceit; that their souls may be saved and their nakedness covered. But if they still walk in disorder, when the church is met together, reprove them openly; and if still they do not reform, but walk in their filthiness, when the church is met together, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, charge them to depart from among you. So, cast them out, and have no union with them, not so much as to eat with them, until they repent, and turn to the Lord, and walk in obedience to that which is pure. If they do this, then receive them again: but if they still walk on in the stubbornness of their wills, and do not bend to that which is pure in their consciences, keep them forth, that no filthy person dwell in the house of God. Then will the blessing of the Lord God be with you.

And this is his word to you, see that there be not any in outward lack in the church, and that all walk orderly in their places and callings. And if any root of bitterness spring up in any, which causes strife in their minds one against another, as soon as you know of it, call such before you and examine the matter strictly; and stand in the wisdom and power of God to guide you to judge the cause, and end it in righteousness. But if the cause be hard for you to discern, and the measure you are grown to cannot discern between the parties, I charge you, and command you, not to be hasty in the cause before you, to order it in your doubtful and dark minds: 'for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' But send for some who are more grown in discerning, to judge the cause and end it in righteousness. Then will deceit be judged, and strife kept out, and the innocent set free to serve the Lord: and your union will be in Christ Jesus, where you will bring forth fruit, abiding in him, and through his blood you shall overcome the world in you and without, and shall reign as kings upon the earth. In the power of Christ you shall command the unclean spirit, in all his appearances within you and without; and he shall submit to the power of God in you, dwelling in Him who alone is power, and to whom all glory belongs forever. The pure spirit of the most high God, rest upon you, whom he hath chosen to watch over his flock; and his mighty power open the pure eye in you, to discern and separate between the precious and the vile, the holy and the unholy; and furnish you with courage and with boldness and wisdom to rule in the power of his spirit, to cut down all deceit, and to wash the disciples' feet, in bowing to the pure [mind] in the least appearance; and ministering to it, to strengthen the desire raised up towards the name of the Lord, until judgment be brought

forth unto victory. Then will you have unity together in that which is begotten of God, who reigns over all, blessed forever. Wisdom is justified of her children.

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

The other epistle to which allusion has been made, is dated 1653, and was printed in London in 1654, as a tract, with three epistles of other Friends; and appears to have been one of the first pieces circulated in the metropolis. No reader will doubt its discovering strong symptoms of the need of oversight and care among those to whom it was addressed.

Dear Friends,

I suffer with the imprisoned Seed unto which I was sent to preach the everlasting Gospel, to the opening of your blind eyes, that you might see your lost estates; how your immortal souls lie in the pit wherein there is no water; and to bring them forth, that they might stand in the liberty of my Father's love in the free covenant of life in the Lord Jesus.

This covenant is to the Seed, which is pure and holy; it enlightens your understandings, and lets you see every bypath and broad way, and cries behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn from the pure light which is in your consciences. To the light in your consciences I appeal, which shall witness it. Many of you have not been faithful in walking with the Lord, since you heard the Gospel of your salvation. I charge you in the presence of the Lord and by his power, to examine your consciences, every one of you, which will witness with me.

I suffer among you, for the immortal Seed, that suffers in you. I charge you, slight not the examination of your hearts, every one of you in particular. I see who you are in whom the Seed suffers; in some under one deceit, and some in another: and to the light of Christ in your consciences I direct you; every one of you, dwell in the pure light which is in your consciences; and you will see yourselves, and witness these lines to be from God, before whom all is naked and bare. I charge you by the Lord, hasten every one of you to meet the Lord, in speedily reforming your ways. You who are slothful, hearken to the light in your conscience, and it will awaken you; and you who are flown up into the air, to speak of that you live not in, hearken, and it will stop your mouth, and cause you to lie low before the Lord. You who are exalted above your brother, be attentive to the light in your conscience, and it will pluck you down and cause you to serve him in love. You who are delighting in the earth more than in the Lord your God, be attentive to the light in your conscience, and it will bring your earthly mind to judgment, and rend you from the earth. And you who are a self-lover, if you save yourself and regard not your brother, be attentive to the light in your conscience, and it will bring you to self-denial, and to love your brother, to watch over him, and to suffer with him in his sufferings.

I charge you, in the presence of the everliving God, that every one be faithful according to the measure of light, the Lord has given to profit withal, in the exercise of your consciences towards God and men. Let the light

guide you in all your ways, and it will purge away the filth of the flesh: so will the old man be put off with his deeds, and the imprisoned Seed set at liberty in you. Then, I shall no more come to you with a rod, as I am constrained to do at this time, through your foolishness, who have departed from the pure wisdom, to look abroad in the counsel of your own hearts. For ‘the rod is prepared for the back of a fool,’ but ‘the wise man’s eye is in his head.’ This eye is the light in your consciences: being guided by it, it will lead you to Christ, who is the fountain of wisdom and knowledge.

Now, all you that walk in Him, denying yourselves freely, I have unity with every one of you: be faithful in your measures, that you may grow up together in the Lord Jesus, a peculiar people, a holy priesthood, to offer up your souls and bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord our God: that he may guide you by his power to his praise and glory, who alone is worthy to be feared and obeyed by all his saints forever and ever.

With love, I salute you all in the Lord, and to his power I commit you. The Lord God Almighty enlighten your understandings, and bless you, and guide you in wisdom, to watch over one another in love, that the God of love may be exalted in all of you.

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

12th month, 1653

Chapter VI

1654. William Dewsbury imprisoned at York—Circumstances attending his apprehension—Malice of the constable—Pursued to Crake, and there taken at midnight—His ill treatment—Endures three months’ imprisonment—Innocence—Imprisoned at Derby—Refuses to leave the prison without the magistrates’ intervention—Is thrust out accordingly—Brought before the mayor at Leicester—Put out of the town, but returns—Proceeds to Northampton—Thomas Andrews’ treatment of him—Is seized by the high-constable, but set at liberty—Francis Ellington convinced—William Dewsbury is taken up on a charge of blasphemy, and committed to the common jail.

In the first month, 1654, we find this faithful man at York. He was cast into the prison of that city under the name of a seducer, with the following accusation, namely,—“for seducing the people of this nation, and for suspicion of blasphemy and breaking the public peace, in dispersing principles contrary to the truth of the Gospel and peace of the nation.” Edward Bowles, priest of York, was his accuser, who gave forth a paper, charging him with being, in addition to the other allegations, a ringleader of the persons called Quakers. As the general court sessions were then being held, this paper was delivered by the foreman of the grand jury to Hugh Wyndham, who sat on the bench as judge of the criminal court. He immediately

granted a warrant in open court for the apprehension of Dewsbury. The charges were serious, and the agitation of the public mind was at that time so great, in consequence of a plot that was suspected against Cromwell, that people were ready to believe without examination or proof: nor was there much benefit in general to be derived from the most straightforward explanation of facts and circumstances.

In the prosecution of his religious labors, William Dewsbury had proceeded in the meantime to Tholthorpe, where the constable, more like a ruffian than a peace officer, fell in with him. While he was at a meeting, and engaged with others in the solemn act of waiting upon God, the aforesaid officer rushed in upon them, and with a manifest intention of injuring William Dewsbury, twice attacked him with an iron fork; “but,” says he, “the Lord by his power chained him, and prevented his bloody intents.” Whether the fellow was over-awed by the calm, solemn, and dignified deportment of the Friends, or whether from some other cause, it is not easy to understand by what means he was prevented from carrying the warrant into execution. Thus disappointed, however, he proceeded to Kirby Hall, the residence of Thomas Dickenson, a justice of the peace, and there renewed his accusation, and procured another warrant for Dewsbury’s apprehension and imprisonment, grounded in part on that issued previously by Judge Wyndham.

At Crake, a small town about twenty-five miles northwest of York, he was apprehended by John Lockwood, the high-constable, to whose hands, it would appear, the warrant had been committed. This officer, very unlike the former one, willing to save himself trouble, proposed his remaining with his friends that night, it being late, on condition of their becoming bound for his appearance the next day. But Dewsbury told them resolutely, that no man should be engaged for him, neither desired he favor at their hands: and turning to the constable, said, “If you have power over the body, do with it what you have power to do.” But as the evening was advancing, he bade him stay at his friend’s house until the morrow; whereupon he assured the officer of his readiness to go with him at the time appointed, if the Lord pleased.

This little season of respite afforded him and his friends an opportunity of sitting down together to wait upon God; an exercise at all times profitable, but never more so than in straits and difficulties. Thus engaged “in the night season, with many of the Lord’s servants and children,” “waiting on Him who is worthy to be waited upon, and is good to the souls that wait upon him, to the souls that seek him,” and the night being far spent under this exercise, they were surprised by the inhabitants of the town, with the high-constable at their head, (contrary to his own engagement,) who surrounded the house, and attacking the doors and windows with great fury, determined to have the disposing of Dewsbury themselves. When, in their blind rage, they had got this innocent servant of the Lord into their hand, they urged him along the street, shouting from one ale-house to another, until they had found one into which entrance could be obtained. This done, they committed him to the custody of two men until the next day; and in the morning, he was brought before Dickenson, who being unable to prove anything against him, committed him to York Castle, by virtue of the warrant previously issued by Judge Wyndham.

[In an original letter written from York Castle, the 2nd of the fifth month, William Dewsbury speaks

largely in commemoration of the Lord's dealings with him, that he had seen much of his mighty power manifested, in carrying him along in the service of the Gospel, wonderfully preserving and upholding his outward man many times, when he seemed given over to death; and though the plots and snares of evil men had abounded against him, yet were none of them allowed to prevail,—“it pleased my dear Father they had no power against me, until I had been among all the Friends in the east part of Yorkshire.”—*Editor.*]

Here, innocent of the commission of any real crime, he was detained a prisoner until the general court sessions, which occurred on the 22nd of the fifth month following, when Judge Wyndham sat again upon the bench. On that occasion, for the Truth's sake, and that nothing might lay unjustly either upon the holy cause itself or upon the sufferer for it. Friends, always courting investigation in open trial, anxiously interceded with the judge, for the prisoner to have the same advantages that thieves and murderers were allowed, namely, to meet his accusers face to face; and then, if the transgression of any just law could be proved against him, they were willing he should suffer for it, as he was also himself. Nothing could be more fair than this; and publicly accused as he was, and abused as he had been, he had a right to demand the protection of the law. The judge promised him a fair trial, but broke his engagement: for William Dewsbury was never, on those charges, brought before him, but, at the conclusion of the court sessions, was cleared by proclamation, and set at liberty on the 24th of the fifth month.

Thus did they treat this innocent man. He was apprehended as a criminal, abused as one whom the law had placed out of its protection, committed to prison upon vague and empty and malicious charges, without shadow or pretense of proof, detained there for a period of three months; and then, without being afforded the opportunity of defending his character, was set at liberty; no doubt, in order that his accuser, the priest Bowles, might escape the disgrace, which must have resulted from an impartial examination in open court.

[The following letter, addressed by William Dewsbury to Margaret Fell, will be interesting to the reader, as conveying his own account of these circumstances. It is copied from the original.—*Editor.*]

My dear Sister,

In the Lord Jesus, where my life is bound up with you, and all my brethren and sisters in the Truth of God, in your family and elsewhere, my love salutes you all in the Lord, where my union is with you and your family and all my Father's children thereaway and elsewhere. Oh, the riches of the love of our God, who has created all things for his pleasure, and has chosen us in his free love, and has made us partakers of his riches which he has laid up for us in Christ Jesus; which love overcomes all things, and constrains to give up soul and body, a living sacrifice, unto the will of our heavenly Father, to dispose of them according to the counsel of his own will, who created them for his own glory, who alone is worthy of all glory, honor, power, and praises forever!

Dear sister, great have been the plots of Haman's nature, against the time of this court sessions, to get something against us, to bring us under their law, that their wills might be satisfied; but in all their works of darkness, our heavenly Father brought them to light. I was moved to write to priest Bowles: and the Lord smote him with such terror that he could not tell what way to turn to cover his deceit; for the terror of the Most High was upon him. So he wrote to Oliver Cromwell; and when he sent the letter, Cromwell expressed these words, when he read it, 'They would have me to disown this people; shall I disown them because they will not put off their hats?' And the high-sheriff came to me to clear Bowles; but the power of the Lord cut the deceit in him, that he went from me in much rage, and said I was the most diabolical fellow, with many other bitter expressions. Then Bowles sent to Thomas Fairfax, who was once the general of the army; and told him, he had brought him on in casting me into prison, and he might bring him off. And thus the man did fly to the arm of flesh: but my God, who is my refuge, pursued him with terror, and caused fearfulness to surprise the hypocrite whichever way he went. They gave forth great words, what they would do at the court sessions, as Haman did, who built the gallows for Mordecai; but the power of the Lord trampled upon them, and great fear surprised priest Bowles, the sheriff, and the judge; that as they were in trouble, to accomplish their design to cast my body into prison, [so they desired] to cover me with lying aspersions, when they had it there; and as the Philistines were plagued, while they had the ark of the covenant, till they sent it back, so were they: they dared not let me nor any of our friends come before them. And as the Philistines sent the ark back the same way it came, so were they who had cast me into prison by their false accusations, forced to make open proclamation in the court, and in the castle-yard, when the country was met together, that if any had anything against me, to speak; thus clearing me of all these lying aspersions, they liberated me to go forth. The Lord takes the wise in their own craft: praises forever be unto his great and glorious name, who is raising up his own Seed in the hearts of his children to obey his will, and has kept us bold, valiant, and faithful in this day of trial. Captain Bradford, and Friends who were called upon service at this court sessions, have been kept bold, valiant, and faithful in their measure, trampling upon proud flesh in its glory.

My dear sister, the Lord God of power is with you, who has chosen you in his love, to bear witness of his great and glorious name; and his power rest upon you, to the threshing down of all deceit, that his tender plants may be watered with the streams of his love through you, in the Lord Jesus, where you fare well, and there I am with you, your dear brother.

—W. D.

Being now "delivered from the hands of unreasonable men," he pursued his journey as the Lord directed him, declaring his word in Cleveland and other parts of Yorkshire, through Nottinghamshire, and so to Derby.

[It is satisfactory to be able here to introduce part of a short letter to a Friend, which supplies us with some information with regard to his travels in the ministry at this juncture.—*Editor.*]

God is opening a door for his truth in many great towns in Yorkshire, where it has been kept out; as at Halifax, Leeds, York, Beverly, Hull; and since my disposing of the family that was on me, I have been pretty much in these great towns in my passing south, as Lincoln, Nottingham, Newark, Oakham, Leicester, Wellingborough,—large meetings in all parts,—a tender people are coming towards Zion, who have stood off,—Newark the least. At Leicester, we met at the castle a very large people; that night, a large meeting at the White Hart Inn, where we lodge. If God will, I shall be at a general meeting at Northampton the next third day, and at Leicester the next first day after.

William Dewsbury had not, however, been at liberty more than a month, before his lot was again cast within the walls of a prison. For, as he was engaged in preaching to the inhabitants of Derby, he was seized, and carried before the general sessions of the town, which were then holding. This took place on the 24th of the sixth month. When brought into court, one of the justices, probably on account of his not taking off the hat, said to him, magisterially enough no doubt, “In whose presence do you now stand?” To which William Dewsbury, I should conclude, from his general character, not lightly, but under a sense of its being proper at the time, replied, “In the presence of the everlasting God.” On this, the jailer was commanded to take him away, and put him in prison, for disturbing the court, which was accordingly done. Towards night, the mayor sent for him, to inquire of him, what he came to do? He answered, “To declare the word of the Lord to the consciences of the inhabitants of Derby.” The mayor then asked him, if he would go out of the town? This, Dewsbury refused to do, saying, “When the Lord orders me to go forth, then I shall go; till then, I shall stay.” The mayor then commanded him to be returned to the prison. The next day, in the forenoon, one of the mayor’s officers was sent to him, to say, that if he would go out of the town, and promise not to return, he would open the prison doors, and he might go forth; upon which, William Dewsbury, who had by this time proved himself to be a man of no ordinary courage, said in reply, “Out of the town I shall not go, until I am ordered of the Lord; and if you open the door, I shall not go forth of the prison, till the man who said he had authority to put me in, come by the same authority and take me out.” Most likely the prisoner suspected a trap: how it was with the mayor, it is not easy to say. Whether, conscious of his illegal proceedings, he was intimidated by this resolute conduct on the part of William Dewsbury, or whether he acted from some other motive, is not known; but it is at least curious, that, shortly afterwards, the man under whose charge he was committed to prison, was sent to discharge him; who took him by the arm, not with entreaty, as was the case with Paul, when he was confined with Silas at Thyatira, but with much anger put him forth, and delivered him to another officer. This man had orders to put him out of the town; which he did, charging him with many threatenings, to depart and not return. But William Dewsbury, feeling himself to be moving under commands of a higher order, and knowing that he was not in the transgression of any righteous law, considered these but the words of vain men, and without regarding them, returned forthwith and continued in Derby until he was free in his spirit to leave it.

When this time arrived, he pursued his journey to Leicester; and there, on the 3rd of the seventh month,

being the first-day of the week, a large number of the people were collected together to hear him, to whom he declared the word of the Lord. After his testimony was finished he proceeded to the public place of worship; and when the speaker had done, William Dewsbury preached the word of eternal life to the assembly, who heard him with much attention. But before he had finished his testimony, two officers laid hold of him, and with violence carried him before the mayor of the town; who committed him to prison without examination, and therefore without proof of any illegal or disorderly act. The next day, he was again brought before the mayor and another in authority, who then examined him, but could find nothing that would warrant his detention. They however commanded the keeper of the common jail to put him out of the town, and, as the authorities of Derby had previously done, strictly charged him “to depart forth of their coasts;” with many threatenings, what they would do if he returned. But as before, without regarding the threats of man, in obedience to the command of the Lord, he returned to finish his testimony to the inhabitants of Leicester, of whose blood he had not previously felt himself clear.

As soon as William Dewsbury, in submission to those impressions which he believed to be from the Spirit of Truth, apprehended himself at liberty to leave Leicester, he pursued his journey into Northamptonshire, and proceeded to Wellingborough, on a visit to the flock of God scattered thereabout; where he tarried for a season, finding many in that neighborhood whose minds were opened to receive “the word of life with much gladness of heart.” An occurrence took place in this town, which ultimately occasioned him some months’ imprisonment at Northampton; and will serve to show, that his labors were so successful as to excite the displeasure and jealousy of a resident priest there, whose name was Thomas Andrews. As he was passing along the street, near the dwelling of the latter, the priest called to him, to “give over deceiving the people, lest the plagues of God should fall upon him.” To which Dewsbury replied, “If you say I deceive the people, make it manifest, wherein I deceive them.” He answered, “You tell them there is no original sin.” Dewsbury then required him to say, whether he heard him say so. But he, making no answer to that, the former told him, he must either prove what he had accused him of, or confess himself condemned of making a false accusation: he however hastened away, without giving any answer. About three weeks afterwards, namely, on the 29th of tenth month, 1654, William Dewsbury having been absent from Wellingborough in the interval, felt it to be his religious duty, (“I was ordered of the Lord,” says he,) to return to the place again; and hearing there was to be a lecture in the house where Thomas Andrews was preacher, who had thus falsely and publicly accused him, for the truth’s sake he went there, entered the house and stood in silence until Andrews had done preaching, and had dismissed the people. He then took the opportunity of exhorting the congregation, who listened without opposition. After this, addressing himself to the priest, he called upon him, to make it manifest to the people, wherein he had deceived them, or to confess his error. Without offering any reply, he again retreated, “he fled away.”

Notwithstanding the reasonableness of this conduct on the part of Dewsbury, who was the offended party, he was haled out of the meetinghouse, by a man more zealous than discriminating, into the yard; where he embraced the opportunity again afforded him, of preaching to the collected multitude, they standing quietly to hear him; until the high-constable made his appearance; who seized and conducted him as a

criminal into the market-place, and threatened to bring a charge of blasphemy against him. When it was found that nothing could be proved against him, he was liberated. He retired to the house of his friend, Francis Ellington, and from an upper window, preached to the people collected below, many of whom received the word in much love. Ellington soon afterwards became his fellow-prisoner.

This Friend was an extensive wool manufacturer at Wellingborough. The manner in which he became acquainted with William Dewsbury, was this. In the pursuit of his business, he happened to be at a fair at Harborough in Leicestershire, where he heard, that a “Yorkshireman” was tarrying at a Friend’s house in that town; and that he was that day intending to hold a meeting, in order to his declaring the word of the Lord to the people. To this meeting Francis Ellington went, and was effectually convinced that the word of the Lord was really preached on this occasion. Such was the power which attended, that it enlightened his understanding “to see the way of eternal life; for which,” says he, “I had long sought in my imagination of the saints’ conditions.” When the meeting was over, yielding to a powerful impulse of religious unity, he desired William Dewsbury, as the Lord’s servant, to come home to his house, as soon as he was free in his spirit so to do. Which appears to have been the occasion of the present visit.

But to proceed with our narrative. On the following day, the constable having procured a warrant for the apprehension of “one who is commonly called a Quaker,” came to the house of Francis Ellington; and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the latter, against taking any person into custody on such a vague warrant as that in his possession, for the name of the party to be arrested was not mentioned in the warrant, the constable laid his hands on William Dewsbury, although Joseph Storr was also present, and declared him to be the man he wanted, requiring him to go before a justice. This he was compelled to do the same day. He was conducted to the residence of Thomas Pentlow, who lived at Wilby, two miles off, and who appears to have been a rigid persecutor. Francis Ellington and Joseph Storr, willing to stand by their friend, in his present trial, accompanied him to the house. An additional reason why these Friends accompanied William Dewsbury was, that they had also a complaint to make against a woman in the service of the said justice, who a few days before had annoyed Ellington and others by abusing them in the street, and by throwing water, stones, and dirt at them. The justice having examined William Dewsbury, and found on his person some papers addressed to Cromwell, then Protector, made out a court order, and sent him to the common jail at Northampton, there to await the court sessions in the first month following. As the court order, among other allegations, was also said to contain a charge of blasphemy, Dewsbury was the more earnest to obtain a copy; which reasonable demand was, however, denied him. As to the complaint against the woman, which Ellington and his friends preferred before Justice Pentlow, it procured them no redress. After calling them to account, for being found on his premises, he told them, the woman had served them right, for aught he knew, and he would do nothing against her; and charged them to be forthcoming at the approaching sessions, as he should send a constable for them, that they might answer there for having come to his house. One account states, that Pentlow included Ellington’s and Storr’s names in the court order. In consequence of such treatment, Ellington a few day after wrote a letter to the justice, which offended him still more deeply, and was the ground of his shortly afterwards

suffering for several weeks in company with other Friends in Northampton jail.

[By a letter in William Dewsbury's handwriting, addressed to George Fox about this time, it would seem there followed from the labors of this devoted servant "a great convincement," and an earnest desire prevailed among many, for Friends to come among them; and he intimates his belief, that a blessing will attend those, who being truly drawn and called, give up to the service. Another letter runs thus: "Many dear people has our Father in these parts, the harvest is great, mighty people our God is bringing forth hereaways, to wait upon him for his wisdom to guide them to his praise and glory." Nor is this from his own pen alone: John Whitehead, a zealous laborer, writes to George Fox from Wellingborough, of "a mighty thirst on every side, great meetings, and many convincements."—*Editor.*]

Chapter VII

1655. Letter of William Dewsbury—Court Sessions—His trial, with other Friends, before Judges Hale and Wyndham—They refuse to enter into bonds, and are continued in prison—Observations on the trial, with remarks on the times—Apprehensions entertained respecting Friends—Anecdote respecting George Fox and Colonel Hacker—Two letters of Dewsbury's.

The following letter, under the hand of William Dewsbury, contains a brief but somewhat detailed account of circumstances respecting him at this period; and will put the reader in possession of information connected with the transactions of the preceding chapter, which would otherwise be lacking, and could not be supplied from any other source.

Dear Friends,

Be not troubled at the Lord's disposing of us, in permitting the devil to cast us into prison; for with you we are in the liberty of the spirit, in the unity which cannot be separated. I have declared to you the Lord's ordering of us to his praise and glory. On the 10th day of the eleventh month, Joseph Storr, my fellow-prisoner, and I were carried from the prison to the sessions, which were held at Northampton. There were John Parker, who fined my brother, Thomas Aldam, and others called justices, who were in great enmity against the truth. But the witnesses, who had sworn against me, as they said, for blasphemy, did not appear. The Lord smote them with terror; the lying spirit dared not appear. They were confounded in that they charged against me; and many friends appeared in much boldness for the truth; Justice Crutt and James Nagill, who are great in the outward; their dwellings are in Bickering Park, Bedfordshire; and one Edward Hackney, an attorney at Kettering in Northamptonshire.

There had not been above three meeting with me; yet the enmity of John Parker and those with him, required bondsmen to be bound for me: for they said I had written strange papers to the lord Protector, and if I would not find men to be bound for me, I should go to prison again. I then required of them, to read me any law I had transgressed; but they would not, but called for bondsmen. I answered. There shall not any be bound for us; here are our bodies, do with them what you have power to do. They commanded the jailer to take us away. We were not allowed to speak any more, but taken and put into prison; and a copy of our court order we cannot have; but were denied both by the jailer, and the men called justices, when it was demanded of them in open court. But the wrath of man turns to the praise of God. For the truth of God was much spread abroad that day, and a mighty thirst was raised in the hearts of many towards the name of the Lord; praises forever be to him, whose ways are past finding out. He takes the wise in their own craft, and overturns them in their own devices, to their shame and contempt; but to the glory of his name, who alone is worthy, God over all, blessed forever!

—W. D.

William Dewsbury, together with Joseph Storr, whose name was included in the court order, for no other crime than that of being present at the examination of his friend, being committed to prison, were confined there among thieves and murderers, twelve steps under ground, until the quarter sessions on the 10th of the next month; when, so far from receiving any mercy at the hands of the justices, they were again refused a copy of their court order, and committed to appear at the next court sessions about two months afterwards. Francis Ellington was now added to their number, and Henry Williamson, who had been sorely beaten and abused for attempting to speak to the people at the public house of worship after the officiating priest had done, was also sentenced to drink of the same cup. The court sessions commenced the 10th of the first month, 1655, when the prisoners, Dewsbury, Storr and Williamson, were brought to the bar, before Judges Matthew Hale and Hugh Wyndham, who were then associated in the same commission. The following examination thereupon took place.

Judge Hale.—Are you Dewsbury?

William Dewsbury.—Yes, I am so called.

Judge Hale.—Where do you live?

William Dewsbury.—I have a wife and three children at Wakefield in Yorkshire.

Judge Hale.—What came you into this country to do, that you did not stay in your own country with your wife and children?

William Dewsbury.—I stayed in that country with my wife and children, until the Father revealed his Son in me, and called me forth from my wife and children to declare his word of eternal life, which he has manifested to my soul in the great work of regeneration, in the new covenant of life in Christ Jesus. I am

sent to preach the everlasting Gospel to those that dwell upon the earth.

Judge Hale.—I fear it is a delusion, and your own fancies, and not the truth.

William Dewsbury.—Time will make it manifest.

Judge Hale.—You draw people together, and act against ministry and magistracy.

William Dewsbury.—As you stand in the presence of God, take heed of hearkening to false accusations. Ministry and magistracy, which are of God, I own: but those who are called ministers of Christ, and walk contrary to Scripture, I disown.

Judge Hale.—But who are they that walk contrary to Scripture?

William Dewsbury.—They that abide not in the doctrine of Christ, “but have the chief place in the assemblies; stand praying in the synagogues, love greetings in the market-places, and are called of men, masters,”—which practices Christ cried woe against; and they that walk in them, walk contrary to Scripture.

Judge Hale.—These are small things to speak of.

William Dewsbury.—There is nothing small which the Lord commands.

Judge Hale.—You say well. (To the court.) What have you against these men?

William Dewsbury.—That is what we would have manifested, what law we have transgressed.

Judge Hale.—Produce what you have against them, and I shall proceed according to law.

Cleric of the Peace.—Here are papers which Dewsbury and Storr had, which are against the lord Protector.

William Dewsbury.—The papers they took from me, which they say are against the lord Protector, I was moved to write. I sent one to him privately with care, in the fourth month in last year, and the other has with care been privately delivered to him; and privately I kept the copy of the papers, until I was apprehended by virtue of a warrant granted by Justice Pentlow. There was not any name in it, but it was for one whom he had in scorn called a Quaker: and with that warrant, the constable had me before him. He commanded the constable to see if I had any money; which was done, and my money taken from me, and after a little time he gave it to me again. Then they took those papers from me, which I had privately on me in a letter case, which here they publish publicly as an evidence against me.

Judge Hale.—Read the paper. (When part of it was read.) Give over, that paper is not to be published.

William Dewsbury.—It is not my mind they should be published.

Judge Hale.—How dare you write to him in such high language, as from the Spirit of the Lord?

William Dewsbury.—They in whom the Spirit of the Lord is, write from the Spirit, and he that has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his.

Judge Hale.—But I fear it is not from the Spirit, for many pretend the Spirit, and the divine light, and revelations; but how shall we know they are the truth according to the Scriptures?

William Dewsbury.—The Scriptures cannot be known but by the pure divine light of Christ, which enlightens every one that comes into the world; of which pure light Christ has given to every one a measure, to try the spirits in them, whether they be of God or not. Every spirit that confesses Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; but he that denies Christ is come in the flesh, is the spirit of antichrist. And this light gave the Scriptures forth, which light leads to Christ, who reveals the Father to the soul which gives up to be guided by him. So the soul comes to know God by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and they who walk in the spirit are known by their fruits in all their words and works. The prophet Amos, had the spirit of the Lord, and from the spirit declared the word of the Lord to the king of Israel, but the people could not bear his words.

Judge Hale.—You say well, if you do as you say; but this, it may be, will be expected, and I think it will be fair, to give bail for your appearance at the next court sessions.

William Dewsbury.—First make manifest what law we have transgressed, before bail be required.

[After this the prisoners were set aside, and the judge proceeded to other business; but in the evening, when the court was ready to break up, the jailer asked the judge what he should do with those Yorkshiremen?]

Judge Hale.—Bring them before the court.

[Which was done. Then some in the court said, “Take off their hats;” and two of their hats were taken off; but as they were about to take off William Dewsbury’s, the judge said, “Let it be on,” and bade them put on the hats of the other two again, which was done at his command. He then spoke to William Dewsbury.]

Judge Hale.—Now I see what you are, and your disguise and form of fair words is seen, and you are not the man you pretend to be.

William Dewsbury.—Disguises and formality I deny; but the power of God I own and witness, in which I stand, and am subject to it, and to the ordinance of man for conscience sake.

Judge Hale.—Now you are commanded: Take off your hat.

William Dewsbury.—Honor is not in pulling off the hat, but in obeying the just commands of God; and my hat offends not any. They who are offended at it, may take it off: I shall not resist them. But there is no Scripture that expresses any honor to be in putting off the hat.

Judge Hale.—What! must we do nothing but what is expressed in Scripture, for our apparel, what we shall put on?

William Dewsbury.—Yes, the Scripture says, Let your adorning be with modest apparel.

Judge Hale.—Are you judge, that you stand covered and will not uncover, as other prisoners do?

William Dewsbury.—What I do, God is my witness, I do it not in contempt to any, but in obedience to the power of God for conscience sake.

Judge Hale.—If you will not stand as prisoners, I will not do anything concerning you; but here I found you, and here I shall leave you.

William Dewsbury.—We have been above ten weeks in the low jail, and no breach of any law found against us: we stand subject to the power of God, whatever he allows you to do with us.

Thus far as relates to the present examination of William Dewsbury.

On the 12th of the same month, the Judges Wyndham and Hale being together upon the bench, they called for the prisoners Dewsbury, Storr, and Williamson.

Judge Wyndham.—Take off their hats.

Judge Hale.—Read the evidence against them. [Which having been done as before.] What say you, did you speak these words?

[William Dewsbury then related his encounter with the priest Andrews, and the circumstances which led to the disturbance in the market-place at Wellingborough; asserting the breach of the peace and the tumult to have been caused by his accusers, and not by him. The examination then proceeded.]

Judge Wyndham.—Dewsbury, you are well known in the north and in Yorkshire; there I have heard of you; but where were you born?

William Dewsbury.—My natural birth was in Yorkshire.

Judge Wyndham.—Do you begin to cant? Is there any other birth?

William Dewsbury.—Yes. “Except you be regenerate and born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God.” Which birth I witness.

Judge Wynhdam.—At what place in Yorkshire were you born?

William Dewsbury.—At a town called Allerthorpe, nine miles from York, towards Hull.

Judge Wynhdam.—Where have you been your time?

William Dewsbury.—When I was thirteen years of age, I was bound apprentice to a cloth maker in the west part of Yorkshire, at a town called Holdbeck, near Leeds.

Judge Wynhdam.—Did you serve your time?

William Dewsbury.—I did stay till the time was nearly expired, and then the wars began in this nation, and I went into the service of the parliament.

Judge Wynhdam.—Do you deny all Popish tenets?

William Dewsbury.—Popish tenets I deny; and all tenets contrary to the pure doctrine of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Judge Wynhdam.—Do you own the Scriptures to be a rule to walk by?

William Dewsbury.—The Scriptures I own; and the pure light and power of Christ Jesus that gave them forth, to guide in a holy conduct according to the Scripture; and he that walks contrary to it is condemned by it.

Judge Wynhdam.—Couldst you not stay in your own country, and keep your opinions to yourself; but you must go abroad in the country, and in these parts, to delude the people, and to make a disturbance?

William Dewsbury.—Deluding I deny. I would have you make manifest what delusion is. But truth I witness; and the things I have heard and seen I am sent to declare; which disturbs not the peace of any, but of those who walk not in the truth; whose peace must be disturbed and taken away..

Judge Wynhdam.—But if you and Fox had it in your power, you would soon have your hands imbrued in blood.

William Dewsbury.—It is not so. The Spirit of Truth which we witness in us is peaceable, and neither does violence nor sheds blood: and the hands of all that are guided by the Spirit of Truth, the light and power of Christ, are bound from offering violence, or shedding blood.

Joseph Storr.—Their sufferings and stonings are well known in this nation—and they never lift up a hand against any.

Judge Wynhdam.—It is because you have not power; but here is evidence against you for breaking the peace. Will you give bond for your appearance at the next court sessions?

William Dewsbury.—It is the liberty of the law of this nation, that all who profess the faith of Christ Jesus, may walk in uprightness to their faith in him, without any breach of the laws. And I require, a law may be read to us that the evidence brought against us is the breach of; that by the law we may be convinced of transgression before any bail be required of us.

Judge Wynhdam.—We are judges, and we conceive and judge what is charged against you to be a sufficient ground to require bail of you, for your appearance at the court sessions.

William Dewsbury.—Though you be judges, you are judges of a law, and are to judge according to law, which is your rule to judge by, and that law I would have you to read us; and if we have transgressed it, judge us according to it.

Judge Wynhdam.—You are transgressors of the law, in that you are not subject to government and authority, refusing to pull off your hats.

William Dewsbury.—We are subject to the government and the power of God, and to the ordinance of man for conscience sake; but show us in Scripture, which is a true testimony of the power of God, in which we stand, that putting off the hat is required in subjection to authority; and read us a national law, which is the ordinance of man, that requires such a thing.

Judge Wynhdam.—It is the practice and custom of the nation.

William Dewsbury.—The customs of the heathen are vain.

Judge Hale.—From the evidence which has been read, we expect bond for your appearance, as has been required, at the next court sessions.

William Dewsbury.—We have not transgressed any law: if you know of any law broken by us, let it be read, that we may know what bail is required for; and what we are to answer at the next court sessions.

Judge Hale.—What say you, Storr? Will you enter into bond for your appearance at the next court sessions?

Joseph Storr.—Where are those who have given evidence against me, that I may answer to the particulars of those things charged against me.

Judge Hale.—If you will give bail for your appearance at the court sessions, then shall those that have informed against you appear face to face.

Joseph Storr.—We are bound by a stronger tie than any outward bond.

Judge Hale.—What say you, Williamson? Will you enter into bond for your appearance at the next court sessions.

Henry Williamson.—I am not of any ill behavior; but am bound to good behavior by the power of God.

Judge Hale.—If you will not find sureties, you must lie here till the next court sessions. Look to them, jailer.

They were accordingly conducted back to prison, and there confined eleven weeks in the nasty low jail, as before, among felons, until another assize. In the meantime several others of their friends were committed to prison.

Although it is difficult, no impossible, to reconcile such a result, with the principles of straight-forward justice, it is due to the judges and others in authority in those turbulent times, and in particular to the character of Judge Hale, to observe, that Friends then were not so well understood as they have been since. This, in fact, was one of those instances, in which too little discrimination was exercised, and the innocent were accordingly made to suffer with and for the guilty. For, notwithstanding it was then, as it has ever been, a matter of religious principle among Friends, not to interfere in political questions, nor to mix themselves up as partisans in the agitations of the times about temporal things; yet their free and uncompromising censure of many of the principles as well as practices of the day, rendered it difficult for superficial or prejudiced observers, to distinguish their object from that of other classes of agitators. And when it is remembered that the principles of Friends respecting the national ministry, both as to its appointment and its maintenance, struck at the very root of the union of church and state, it is not to be doubted, that many thought they had sufficient grounds for concluding, that the views of this Society were unfriendly to the government itself. This, however, could not sanction the many unjust and arbitrary proceedings under which, as in the present instance, they were made to suffer; and there is reason to regret, that the name of one, whose character stands so high as that of Judge Hale, should be connected with a proceeding of that nature. It is, nevertheless, very satisfactory to know, that at a later period, when he was better informed, his proceedings towards Friends wore a very different aspect. It will still further illustrate the fact, which has been pretty clearly displayed by the preceding trial, that considerable fears of a political nature were entertained respecting Friends at this time; if the reader is informed, that while these matters were transacting in Northampton, George Fox was no less a cause of apprehension in Leicestershire. For he was about to hold a meeting at Whetstone, near Leicester, Colonel Hacker, who afterwards suffered at Tyburn, as one of the judges of King Charles, sent a company of horse to seize him, on suspicion of his being engaged in a plot then in agitation against Cromwell. In

the course of the examination which followed, Needham, Hacker's son-in-law, observed to his father, in reference to Fox, that he had reigned too long, and it was time to have him cut off. George Fox having remonstrated against such a surprising conclusion, and declared his innocence, Hacker asked him if he would go home and stay there. But he refusing to bind himself to do one thing or to refrain from another, Hacker said, "Then I will send you to my lord Protector tomorrow morning, by Captain Drury, one of his lifeguards." What follows is no less interesting than remarkable. The next morning, when George Fox was delivered to Captain Drury, he desired to speak to the Colonel before he went; which was allowed, and he was brought to his bedside. Hacker told him to go home, and keep no more meetings; which George Fox refusing to do, he said, "Then you must go before the Protector." Whereupon George kneeled at his bedside, and prayed the Lord to forgive him: for he looked on the Colonel's case to be like that of Pilate, who would wash his hands of the guilt of the measure, to which he was stirred up by the priests. George Fox further told him to remember what he had then said, "when the day of his misery and trial should come upon him"—a day little anticipated by Needham, when he made to his father the above-mentioned observation respecting George Fox's career. This is by no means a solitary instance of George Fox's foresight, whencesoever it was derived. Captain Drury, though a man of light behavior, and disposed to ridicule Friends, conducted himself so far courteously to his prisoner, as to allow him to visit William Dewsbury in the jail of Northampton, when he passed through that town.

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From the Editor.—The insertion, at the close of this chapter, of parts of two original letters from William Dewsbury, besides conveying further information as to him and his colleagues, may tend to illustrate the foregoing sentiments of our author, relative to the alarm which certainly at this juncture took hold of the minds of the people at large, but especially some classes, whose church system seemed endangered by the rapid spread of Friends and their principles through the land. These letters are dated from Northampton common jail, the 3rd of the seventh month, and 15th of the eighth month, 1655.

It seems that often, when their persecutors had got Friends into prison, they found "Jerusalem such a burdensome stone," as Dewsbury expresses it, that they could "not readily cast it off;" the tendency of which he describes as grinding them to powder. They found and felt that they had wronged these oppressed people, and how to deliver themselves of their prey, and deliver their own characters too, was sometimes not an easy matter. Friends feared the face of no man, nor could be brought to bow to the corrupt wills of any, whether magistrates or others: they stood to their testimony when they found they must bear it for the Lord and his Truth, against the deceit and oppression of man towards man in the things of God. They could make neither unrighteous concessions nor mean compromises, nor enter into recognizances, nor pay fines nor fees, for doing what they considered their duty; but were ever willing cheerfully to suffer for what nothing short of this sense of duty could have induced them to do. It appears by one of these letters, that the justices made use of the jailer, to see if he could get any words from any of the prisoners, that could be construed, as though they would enter into bonds for good behavior,

and intimated they should then forthwith be set at liberty. But the jailer, though he would often meet others of the prisoners, could not endure William Dewsbury's piercing eye and high-toned virtue, often endeavoring to avoid him, and would even run from him when he saw him coming towards him, sooner than encounter him, and sometimes was not seen by him for more than a week. This was the case with the person periodically officiating as minister among the prisoners; for Dewsbury had protested against him and his doctrine, after he had delivered his discourse, on which, as he relates it, "fear surprised the hypocrite," so that "he stood trembling, and was not able to answer a word." Upon this, the justices actually declared in the open court at the sessions, that the minister "dared not come to preach any more, unless some course were taken with these Quakers;" so an order was given to lock them down in the dungeon, which was done always after, during the hour of preaching. Dewsbury adds:—

"The dread of our God is upon them, their heart fails them; and their torment is daily increased, to see the Lord's work prosper, which goes on in mighty power all over these parts, and all the nation over. Friends grow in the power of our God. They come from London, and many places on every side to visit us, though they hear that they cannot be allowed to come at us:—and the wisdom of our God is much in it, who keeps them in patience, with boldness, to sit at the jail door, for a testimony against them; which adds much to their torment. The jailer threatens them; and some are ordered of the Lord to go to the justices to bear witness against their wickedness; and every one would put it off from themselves, and deny what they have done.

We have all things we need in the outward: three in bonds with me maintain themselves, two brothers, called Marmaduke and Joseph Storr, and one Francis Ellington, who is by trade an upholsterer; and Thomas Goodair is in the town jail, and maintains himself. I have not been free to receive any money of Friends here towards my necessities, which has much confounded my adversaries, that my life should be given up for their souls' good, and not to receive money of them to supply my needs: but in some places I paid for what I needed, where they were not able. As to some that had wealth, but had parents who said they would be destroyed with receiving me, and that their trading would fail in the world; contrary to their minds, I was ordered of the Lord to pay them in full for what I had, that the Gospel might not be burdensome. I am supplied at all times with what I need, and so shall my wife and children be, according to the word of the Lord, which was sealed to me eight or nine years ago, when a house and garden grounds were taken from me by this persecuting spirit, which then would not let me have the benefit of the law, but called me heretic, and said, I might not be permitted to have an outward being in this nation.

Thomas Goodair was kept in the power and wisdom of our God, in the day when he was brought before the rulers of this town for a testimony against them. Thomas Stubbs is in great service, and is precious carried forth in the life. Richard Farnsworth is come up among Friends in these parts; much service the Lord has for him among them: a great conviction there is upon many people, and a great thirst wherever such Friends come; the harvest is mighty, but the laborers are few; pray the Lord of the harvest to send faithful laborers into his harvest.

The last of these communications, with some omissions, runs thus:—

My dear sister,

Our Father has covered the faces of his enemies in these parts with shame, and has exalted his Son over all their heads,—they tremble before his power in his saints, and our God has ordered them in wisdom. Many he moves to come to visit us. Captain Bradford, as he marched up to London, was allowed to quarter in the town, and came to the jail door, to see if he might come to visit us in prison. The jailer was very untoward at first, yet being somewhat afraid, asked him if he had any command in the army; he answered him, ‘What I have, it matters not in this thing; for this I declare to you, what command soever I have in the army, my sword shall not open the jail doors; and if you do not open them, I shall not come in.’ In meekness and patience he stood, until the Lord commanded the jailer’s spirit, that he let him come in; and in precious wisdom he was carried in the town, which did much confound them; and the most of the time he stayed, he was with us, and the prison was full of officers and soldiers. In seventeen weeks before that time, few were permitted to come to us, though some came about one hundred miles. In the week following after Captain Bradford passed away, was the general sessions; and there came certain Friends from Bristol, with our dear brother, John Audland, and some from London, and Justice Crook, and certain others hereaway, who, in the power of the Spirit of our God, did tread on the heads of these that persecute him in his children, that they trembled before the presence of the Most High. Two young men, who are in bonds, were brought before the men that sat at the sessions, and the Lord manifested his power in them, that those called justices were confounded before all the people; but the time of their freedom out of bonds was not yet come. Here are certain precious hearts, that have lived in great pleasures and honors in the world, who are now laying them down willingly at the feet of Jesus: I am moved to lay their case before you, that you may write to them. Justice Crook’s wife is a precious woman, and many other of the handmaids of the Lord, who is carrying his work over all, where he sends his children.

Chapter VIII

*1655. Epistle—Court Sessions—Prisoners tried before Judge Atkins—Refuses to enter into bonds
—Remanded to prison—Detained six months.*

During William Dewsbury’s confinement in Northampton jail, he did not spend his time in idleness; for besides several pieces, which he wrote for the promotion of the cause he had so zealously espoused, he also addressed epistles in various directions for the edification of the church, and to supply the place of his personal labors, in extensively publishing the truth to such as were prepared to receive it. The whole of one, and parts of another of these epistles, it is now my intention to lay before the reader. The following extract from that which comes first in order, and is of a very general character, will, I trust, tend to

edification,—bearing in mind that the point of the piece is leveled against a paid and lifeless ministry.

All people who desire to know the living God, let the time past suffice in which you have followed men who have deceived you, and cease from them; and turn to the true Prophet, whom Moses the servant of the Lord declared the Lord God would raise up, Duet. 18:15, his elect and chosen servant, to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; whom he has also given for a light to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth. Whom Isaiah the prophet also declared the Lord would raise up, to open the fountain of life and salvation to all that thirst, chap. Iv. 1, 2, and is now witnessed by all that hearken to his counsel. He calls, ‘Ho!’ to every one that thirsts, ‘come to the waters, and he that has no money, come buy and eat, yes, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.’

All people, look no longer forth; the glad tidings of the Gospel of eternal salvation are heard within, in this day of the Lord’s mercies, wherein he is teaching his people himself, as was declared by the prophet Isaiah, chap 54 vs. 13, and is now witnessed by all the children of light, whose minds are turned within to wait on the Lord for his teaching, to establish them in the covenant of life and peace. He is performing his promise, which he declared by his servant the prophet Jeremiah to all that wait on him; namely, ‘This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, in those days, says the Lord; I will put my law into their hearts, and write it in their inward parts, and will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.’

Therefore, every one that desires to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, turn your minds within and examine your hearts, search and try your ways with the light that Christ Jesus has enlightened you withal, that shows you what is sin; that pride and covetousness, lying and swearing, dissimulation and cheating, vain and idle communications, foolish jesting and unbelief, are sins. These things you know to be sins in your own consciences, by the righteous law of God in the heart, that reproves you for them in secret. There is your teacher, the Spirit of the Lord within you: which, in this mighty day of his power, he is pouring upon all flesh, according to his promise declared by the prophet Joel, chap. ii. 28, 29. This is now witnessed by his sons and daughters, who walk in the light, and are led and guided by his spirit within them, which keeps the conscience void of offense towards God and towards man.

Hearken, every one, diligently to the counsel of the Lord, the light that witnesses for God in the conscience. Give up to be guided by it; then you will need no more to be taught of men, neither shall your teacher be removed into a corner any more; but your eye shall see your teacher, and ‘your ear shall hear a voice behind you, saying. This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand or to the left,’ as was declaimed by

the prophet, Isaiah 30:20, which is now witnessed.—This is the living word of God within you, who has raised desires in you towards Him. Every one in whom such desires are raised, wait in the light and power which has raised the desires; and the Lord will then strengthen you, and give you power to wait on him in the way of his judgments, until the carnal, earthly, sensual mind, which has led you to delight in lusts and pleasures, and in created enjoyments, below God, be slain by the word of God within, which is a sharp and two-edged sword, to slay the first man, which is of the earth, earthy; and then will you come to witness a being ‘the slain of the Lord.’ The sentence of death will be passed upon the first man, who has led you from God, and on all the strength, wisdom, and righteousness you had in him; and in the power of the spirit, you will be brought, in the true sense of the poverty of your spirits, to hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, to prize and love him, and to judge and deny self with his light, and in it to wait for his power to guide you in every word and work.

[The following letter of advice to an individual, of some station. Judge Fell, of Swarthmore, the Editor ventures to interpose between these two addresses. It is copied from the original.]

TO JUDGE FELL.

Friend,

That which calls for purity in you is dear to me, and with it I suffer, which often secretly groans in you for deliverance. And while you lend your ear to the pure counsel of the holy Seed, you are almost persuaded to lay your crown in the dust at the feet of Christ, who is Zion’s King and Judge; and to follow him daily in the cross, that you might come to the crown which your eyes in measure see is given to all who are faithful in walking in obedience to the will of God. And blessed would you be, if you did stand faithful in the counsel of God; he would wholly persuade you by his unlimited power, and guide you with boldness to deny yourself, and the wills of all men in the world. To the pure light of Christ in your conscience I speak, which will witness me. It is because you turn your ear from it to the enemy of your peace, who draws you into consultations with flesh and blood, which set before you the way of truth to be hard and strait to walk in, that you are not able to walk faithfully in what is manifest to you. And hearkening to this lying spirit, it draws your mind to seek refreshment in the visible things over which the Lord has made you steward, and so to forsake the living mercies which the Lord God of heaven and earth has manifested to his faithful children in your family and elsewhere, who stand in his counsel. In tender love to your soul, his arm is stretched forth to embrace you in his free covenant of life in Christ. If you diligently incline your ear to his counsel, and wait for his power to guide you in perfect obedience to the measure received; then would your talent be daily increased, and victory witnessed over the power of the prince of this world, to tread on his head in the power of Christ: then would the wisdom of the Father be given, in the condition he has placed you, to be a faithful steward over the unrighteous mammon, to use it in its right place: and he would make you partaker of the true substance, Christ the fulness of all things.

Dear friend, as you regard the glory of the living God and the welfare of your soul, and as you will answer before him, slight not the day of your visitation; for the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with you. Be tender over the least motion of the Spirit of Christ; in it wait with boldness, for Christ to guide you in all your ways, in faithful obedience to the will of God. His eternal power bring you under the government of Christ in you, to the praise and glory of the Father of lights, who is God over all, blessed forever. In tender love to your soul I write, who am often with you in spirit, and am known by name,

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY.

From the common jail in Northampton, 7th of Third month, 1655

The other epistle bears evidence of having been addressed exclusively to the members of the newly gathered Society. And while its design is, on one hand, to encourage and strengthen the simple-hearted and faithful, though among these might be the weak of the flock; on the other, the language of rebuke is freely employed towards such as, through hastiness, impatience, or unwatchfulness, were in danger of injuring themselves, and thereby of introducing the body into suffering, and of bringing discredit on the cause itself. It is from the pen, not of a learned man, but of an experienced Christian.

Dear Friends, servants and children of God, whom he has called and chosen out of the world:

Be faithful, all of you, in his counsel. Wait for his power, to guide you in all your thoughts, words, and works, in his pure fear and in obedience to his will. I charge you in his presence, be valiant for your freedom, dwelling in the power of the living God: that he may arm you against the fiery darts of the devil, to resist him in all his wiles, who goes about like a roaring lion, to draw you away, seeking to get your minds from that which is pure, into visible things, there to captivate your affections, to satisfy your wills in created and perishing objects, or in the knowledge of the truth in fleshly wisdom. These feed with the swine upon the husks, the form and image of what you have enjoyed, or what you see, but do not enjoy in the possession, and speak in words without knowledge. With these, there sits a painted beast, the will at liberty, out of the cross.

You whose condition this is, are the foolish virgin, turned from the pure wisdom of God, the light of Christ that convinced you of sin; and you now appear in the outward formality, in the sight of men with a lamp like the wise virgins; but not dwelling in the power of God, lack the oil of joy and gladness in the power of his love. This, the wise virgins have in their lamps, which exercises their consciences and keeps all their affections in order unto the Spirit of Truth, which bridles their tongues not to utter vain words before the Lord; but in true silence to wait upon him, until his spirit moves them to declare his mind, from the living power which the soul possesses and enjoys in Christ, the husband of the wise virgins. He by his power trims the lamp of his bride, the Lamb's wife, she always breathing and thirsting for him to manifest his power to take away sin and renew the image of God; and in Christ Jesus, the soul's life, to witness Him to reign in her forever.

And you are beloved who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for you are the children of the kingdom of my

Father. With you my life is bound up; and to you this is the word of the Lord,—fear not, lift up your heads, and wait in the light with boldness. In it, look up to Christ, your King: he will appear as the lightning from the east unto the west, and you shall behold him subjecting your wild nature to himself. He will heal your infirmities, satisfy your thirsty souls, and give you the end of your hope, the salvation of your souls. You shall sit down with him in the kingdom of the Father, to rejoice in the power of eternal love and life, which is in his presence forever and ever: this is the children's bread, that comes down from heaven.

But you foolish virgins, who sit in the outward form and profession of the truth, your lamps are empty of the power of God, which should cast down your wills and keep them in the daily cross. Thus you are possessed with a drowsy, earthly, careless spirit, which is weary of waiting on the Lord in silence. You have no oil in your lamps; you are turned from the light that would lead you to the power of God, which would preserve in true thirsting, to wait for the refreshment that is in his presence. Thus, while you are sitting in a silent meeting among the wise virgins, who feed on the bread which comes down from heaven, the flesh and blood of Jesus, you are imprisoned and starved for lack of food, which daily strengthens them, the wise virgins, in the power of God, and gathers all their hearts together in one, where the union is in the invisible Being, in silence, rejoicing together in the Lord.

To the consciences of you foolish virgins, I speak: you are strangers to the life which the wise virgins enjoy. Though you come among them, your life is in beautifying the outside of the lamp, in words quickly spoken; but the fear of God is not before your eyes, and your wills are out of the cross. A false joy arises in you, speaking what you do not possess, glorying in other men's lines, and contending for the truth, with the mind that is out of the truth. So you become as trees, with leaves and blossoms, which bear no fruit; and here your folly is made manifest; while you speak to others, yourselves are under reproof, in that you are strangers to the life of God.

I charge and command you to silence the flesh. Speak not before the Lord, you foolish ones, while the worker of iniquity reigns in you, whom the Lord will destroy, unless you repent. Therefore, all Friends who make mention of the name of the living God, examine your hearts, search them, and try your ways in the light that comes from Christ, and with it, read your condition in the book of conscience. There, you will see how you stand in the presence of the living God; whether in the state of the foolish virgins, who are turned from the light of Christ, which convinced them of sin, and are gone into the form of the truth, but are enemies to the cross, making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; or whether you be in the state of the wise virgins, who love the light, and dwell in the power which chastises that nature, which would draw from the light and defile your garments. In the daily cross your souls are kept pure and chaste, to follow the Lamb wherever he goes; and you enter with him into the rest prepared for the people of God, where the foolish virgins shall not come, until they, from their foolish wisdom, return into true obedience to the Father of light.

Dear children of the Lord, be valiant, bold, and faithful in your measures that in the life and power of God, you may stand in the day of great trial, which the Lord will bring upon all that make mention of his name. For power

will be given to the beast to exalt his horn, even to the host of heaven, for the clearing of the sanctuary of the Lord. Then will the foolish virgins, that are enemies to the cross of Christ, who have defiled the sanctuary of the living God, come before him among his saints and children. From among them shall they come, trembling before the power of the beast, when he utters his voice and commands all to worship his image. But then shall all you, children of God, whom he has called to be faithful to him, rejoice in his eternal power; who will keep you at that day in rest and peace, in the Ancient of Days; who will sit to judge in righteousness all that withstand the rising of his glory. And of his dominion there shall be no end.

Friends, meet together in the true silence of your spirits; wait in the light for the unlimited Spirit of the Lord, to manifest his power in you, and bruise the serpent's head in all his appearances, and put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. That, in Him you may grow, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. God Almighty keep you all faithful in his eternal power, to bear his name in righteousness; that his name may be written in your foreheads, and all that see you, may witness you to be the righteous seed whom the Lord has blessed. His power and presence keep you in the unity of the spirit and bond of peace, where I am with you in the unchangeable love and life.

—W. D.

1655

I desire you to let this be read in your meetings, with a good understanding, in the fear of the Lord; for this is the day in which 'I will make a separation between the wise and the foolish, between those that fear the Lord, and those that fear him not,' says the Lord God Almighty.

At the time of the court sessions, which were held the 21st of the fifth month, William Dewsbury was called to the bar, his name being associated with six others, who were imprisoned under similar charges. Seeing the prisoners standing before him with their hats on, the judge, Edward Atkins, after a short pause, asked the jailer, if those were prisoners. On being answered in the affirmative, the judge asked him, if it were his practice to bring prisoners before the court in that manner, and told him he deserved to be fined ten pounds, for bringing them before the court covered. The jailer replied, "If you command me, I shall take off their hats." This being done, and having ascertained which of the prisoners was Dewsbury, for, it appears, both now and on the previous trial, that his preaching had produced a great sensation in those parts of the country where he had traveled, the following examination took place.

Judge.—What are you here for?

Prisoner.—The court order will express what I was committed for, but I am denied a copy of it by the keeper of the jail.

Judge.—What is your name?

Prisoner.—Unknown to the world.

Judge.—Let us hear what that name is, that the world knows not.

Prisoner.—It is known in the light, and not any can know it, but he that has it: but the name the world knows me by, is William Dewsbury.

Judge.—What countryman are you?

Prisoner.—Of the land of Canaan.

Judge.—That is afar off.

Prisoner.—No, it is near. For all that dwell in God, are in the holy city, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven. There the soul is in rest, and enjoys the love of God in Christ Jesus, in whom the union is with the Father of light.

Judge.—That is true. But are you ashamed of your country? Is it any disparagement for you to be born in England?

Prisoner.—No. I am free to declare that my natural birth was in Yorkshire, nine miles from York, towards Hull.

Judge.—You pretend to be extraordinary men, and to have an extraordinary knowledge of God.

Prisoner.—We witness the work of regeneration to be an extraordinary work, wrought in us by the Spirit of God.

Judge.—But the apostles wrought with their hands in their callings.

Prisoner.—They had callings in the world, some were fishermen, Paul a tent-maker; but when they were called to the ministry of Christ, they left their callings to follow Christ, where he led them by his spirit to preach the word. I had a calling in the world, as they had, and in it did abide, until the Father revealed his Son in me, and called me from my calling in the world, to preach the eternal word he had made known to me, in the great work of regeneration.

Judge.—Why did you not abide in your own country, and teach people in those parts?

Prisoner.—I did stay there, until I was called from there to go where I was led by the Spirit of the Lord. And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons and daughters of God, and they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his.

Judge.—You say well; for we must in charity conclude that every one in this place has the Spirit of God in them; but how do you know that you are guided by the Spirit of God?

Prisoner.—They that have the Spirit of God are known by their fruits. And he that believes in Jesus Christ and is guided by his spirit, has the witness in himself.

Judge.—That is true; yet, notwithstanding, I see by your carriage, that what my brother Hale did at the last court sessions, in requiring bonds for your good behavior, he might justly do; for you are against magistrates and ministers.

Prisoner.—Make manifest wherein we are against them.

Judge.—(To Robert Grey, Clerk of the peace,) What have you against these men?

Grey.—Here is an information, given in upon oath by Mr. Robert Beeton, that William Dewsbury, on the 29th of December 1654, did go into the church at Wellingborough, and stood with his hat on in the time of sermon and prayer. And after the minister had done, he spoke these words, “The priests preach for hire, and the people love to have it so: but what will you do in the end thereof?” with other railing words, which made a disturbance among the people.

The judge was then proceeding to examine some of the other prisoners, having first threatened what he would do before he left the town against those who disturbed the ministers, when William Dewsbury said, “It is the liberty of the law of this nation, that any one who is brought a prisoner, before those who sit to judge his cause, may speak for himself, to witness the truth against the false information given against him; and that liberty I take, to manifest the cause of my going into the steeple-house at Wellingborough.” He then related how the priest Andrews had attacked him in the public street, which he told the judge had given occasion to his visit to the public meeting-place, asserting his conduct to have been no breach of any law of this nation. The conversation was then resumed as follows.

Judge.—But in that you are found wandering in the country, you break the law; for there is an old law, that if any did go from their dwellings to travel in the country without a certificate from some justice, they were to be taken as wandering persons.

Prisoner.—If there be any such law, read it to us. And if there be such a law, you know in your conscience it is contrary to the Scriptures. For the apostles and ministers of Christ went to and fro in the country, preaching the word of eternal life, and there were added to the church daily such as should be saved: and the number of saints and brethren was daily increased. And the law which is in force in this nation does allow all who profess faith in Jesus Christ, to have free liberty to walk in the faith which is according to the Scripture.

Judge.—You have an eloquent tongue, and you are proud of it,

Prisoner.—Pride I deny; but the truth I witness, which will judge pride, and torment all who live in it, until it be destroyed.

To this the judge made no answer, but proceeded to examine the other prisoners; who, without any accuser appearing against them, and without proof of the breach of any law, were required to enter into bonds for their good behavior. As this not only involved an acknowledgment of their guilt, but was intended as a check to those proceedings, in which they believed it to be their religious duty and calling to be diligently engaged, they refused to do it. They were accordingly remanded to prison, and detained until the eleventh month, 1655, a period of nearly six months, subjected also to the aggravated trial, of their friends being denied the liberty of visiting them. As they were leaving the court, William Dewsbury, turning to the judge, spoke as follows: “With what measure you measure to us, it will be measured to you again. The Lord God of heaven and earth will judge between you and us, and will give unto you and every one of you, according to the works you have done, and in that day you shall know what is now declared to be the truth: the Lord has spoken it, in whom we trust, and he will deliver us.”

The names of the other prisoners were, Joseph Storr, Henry Williamson, John Whitehead, Marmaduke Storr, Thomas Cockett, and Francis Ellington.

Chapter IX

*Epistles—laborers increase—State of the prisons—Sufferings of Friends—The Cause:
Faithfulness to their calling—Evidences that it was not of man—Sewel’s testimony.*

The following short epistles are introduced to the reader, in expectation that they will prove both interesting and profitable. They appear to have been written during the period of suffering, some particulars of which have just been related. They contain, as well as the preceding ones, strong indications of the writer’s character, and evince both his tenderness and watchful care over the flock of Christ, and the sharpness which he was capable of exercising, when circumstances appeared to require it. “To the tender,” says one who knew him well, “he was exceedingly tender; but to the stubborn and lofty he was sharp and plain, admonishing them, and declaring the righteous judgment of God against that state.” In each of the addresses there are expressions, from which we may gather, that some for whose eye they were intended, had a zeal not altogether according to knowledge, which was displayed in an aptitude to give utterance to feelings under apprehension of duty, when silence would have been more consistent with a sound judgment, and more profitable to the body.

All saints and children of the most high God:

Abide in the calling whereunto you are called: which call is the measure of light given unto you, which witnesses against all the deceitful twisting of the serpent within you, and seals up to your spirits the love of God, in the free covenant of life in Jesus Christ. As you have received of the Lord, walk faithfully with him; so will you be preserved pure, and blameless before him, and be fortified by his power, against all the deceit, subtlety, and windings of the serpent within you and without you.”

I charge you in the presence of the Lord, to abide with God in what he has communicated to you, and run not out from the witness of the eternal spirit, that has in measure sealed you up in the power of his love. You that do run out to speak further than you witness, are as a drunkard that lavishes out himself without the fear of the Lord; and so spend and waste; and the plagues of the Lord are your portion, for no drunkard or lustful person shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

All you children of the Lord, abide in the eternal spirit, which will pass judgment, and bruise the head of the serpent in you. So will you be armed against all the appearances of the serpent without, and keep him out of the Scriptures. And the least of you in the truth of God, will overturn priests, and the men of the world, who dwell in the serpentine wisdom, and make a trade of the Scriptures, speaking and disputing of the saints’ conditions, as the devil did about the body of Moses, but cannot witness the Scriptures sealed to their souls by the eternal spirit. You that dwell in the truth will see such to be houses built upon the sand, tall cedars aspiring into the air, sturdy oaks that stand in the pride of their own conceits, but have no root. Therefore let them not speak of the Scriptures merely, but bring them to the witness, which can witness to them of the Scriptures: so will the Spirit of the living God, speaking in you, raze the sandy foundation. Thus will the sturdy oaks and the tall cedars fall; and the serpent in all his windings and twistings, be bruised, and all deceits overturned, and your souls preserved pure and clean; and the name of the Lord honored, who does accompany the witness of the spirit with his own power. And abiding in his power, you shall reign as kings upon the earth.

The Lord God Almighty be with you all, you sons and daughters of the Most High, and carry you on in his power, faithful unto the end, that you may receive the crown of eternal glory, which is laid up for you in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there you will fare well, and I shall remain with you forever in the Lord.”

—W. D.

Dear Friends,

Meet often together in the name and fear of the living God. And take heed of words; see that the witness speaks, which will cut down your own wills and minister to the witness in others, to the slaying of their wills. And take heed of watching over one another with an evil eye, to spy out one another’s weaknesses and to declare it to others and discover their nakedness. You that are here, are in the same nature as cursed Ham; and the wrath of God will be revealed upon you. But watch over one another with a pure, single eye. And if you see the pure

mind in any one in bondage, whisper you not behind their back to others. But let the witness in you which sees the deceit, and suffers with the pure mind that is pressed down by it, declare the mind of the living God against the deceit: and it will cut it down, and the pure, holy Seed will be set at liberty; and your conscience will be kept clean unto the Lord, in discharging your duty. Thus will your captive brother or sister be restored again out of the hand of the destroyer, and then you will have unity in that which is pure.

The God of power keep you all, his dear children, in his pure wisdom, to walk faithfully with him and one with another. And the blessing of the Lord be with you all forever. Amen!

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

My dear Friends,

This is the word of the Lord to you all, whom my Father has chosen out of the world in his love, to make known his power in you; look not back, but judge that mind with his pure word, wherewith he enlightened your consciences, for the exercising them towards him and towards men.

And stand in His pure counsel and look up to Him; and He will accompany you with His power, and will make the way plain before you, in bringing down that which is untoward within you and disobedient to His will. So his ways will not be burdensome, nor his commandments grievous to you. Cast off whatever he has let you see is offensive to his will, that so your souls may rest in the bosom of his love, that he may carry you on in the arms of his power, faithful unto the end, and crown you with glory, which he has laid up for you in the Lord Jesus.

Slight not his counsel, but be valiant and bold for the glory of his name; and be not hasty to utter words before him: but let your words be few and savory at all times, ministering grace to all that hear you; that his name may be honored in you all, in all your words and actions. Then he will accompany you with his presence, and will make you a terror to all evil doers, ‘one to chase a thousand and two to put ten thousand to flight.’ So will he get himself a glorious name, in the manifestation of his power in you, who stand faithful in his counsel and walk in his fear; and your souls shall be refreshed in the fountain of his love in the Lord Jesus.

Meet often together to wait upon him, in the fear of his name, and watch over one another in love; and he will be with you, to order you in his pure wisdom, to the praise and glory of his great name.

Written from the Spirit of the Lord, to be sent abroad among Friends, to be read at their meetings

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

It was no slight proof of the reality of that power, which attended these witnesses for a true, entire, and glorious reform, that their attacks upon wrong things relating to religion, should have been so signally crowned with the divine blessing; that their exertions in faithfully laying open the prejudices and corruptions of their day, should have been attended with such remarkable effects. At quite an early

period, we find that a large number of laborers were called into the field, eminently gifted for their work, and furnished with an unconquerable willingness to suffer shame for the cause they had espoused, and to expose themselves to the fury of persecution.

In the year 1654, as Sewel informs us, there were above sixty ministers of the word raised up among Friends, who traveled in the work and service of the Gospel, laboring diligently “to turn people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.” But their sufferings kept full pace with the increase of their numbers; of which all of these were more or less partakers. In the preceding year, George Fox was cast into Carlisle dungeon; and such was the malice of his persecutors, that they contemplated his destruction. But their design coming to the knowledge of the parliament, it was arrested. The state of the prisons too, in which so many Friends passed a large portion of their time, as Clarkson informs us in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, was not easily to be conceived; some for filth and pestilential noisomeness, and others for exposure to the inclemency of the elements. Indeed, the condition of these prisons previous to the latter years of the last century, was a disgrace to any civilized community; not only on account of their filthy, unwholesome, and neglected condition, but equally so, because of the indiscriminate association to which all classes of prisoners were subjected. It was common for Friends, mostly men of the better order, often of reputable or wealthy families, to be cast into those dismal dungeons, one of which is now preserved at Warwick jail, and is shown as a relic of former times. I remember visiting it myself in 1810; and the impression I then received will never be effaced. Howard, in his description of this jail, says, “The night-room of the felons is an octagonal dungeon, about twenty-one feet in diameter, down thirty-one steps, damp and offensive; the jailer on going down took a preservative.” Basil Montagu, whose name is so honorably associated with the subject of prisons, prison-discipline, and the punishment of death for crime, in his account of a visit he paid to the same prison in 1815, says, “This offensive vault, which may now be seen in the prison, is eighteen feet ten inches under ground. In the middle is a cess-pool; on the side is a stream for the prisoners to slake their thirst. There is a large heavy chain now in the dungeon, that passed through a link in the chains of each of the felons, which was then carried up the steps and secured to the outer door of the vault. The only light and air admitted, is through an iron grate on the top, and nearly, even with the surface of the ground.”

These are the dismal cells in which Friends were often made to suffer, in company with the most abandoned characters; and in which, as these sufferings abounded, their consolation did often much more abound; under a sense of which, they sang praises to God in their bonds, and with William Dewsbury esteemed the locks and bolts as jewels.

It was in Warwick jail, that William Dewsbury was imprisoned nineteen years of his life, four years of which he was a close prisoner; whether in the pit or not is not stated. Nor should we have known that this was the fact respecting his confinement in Northampton jail from any statement of his own; for he suffered too cheerfully to lay much stress on the vile durance he underwent. But it was, as stated by others, in a dungeon twelve steps under ground, among the worst of felons, that he was there

imprisoned. In such a dungeon as we have been describing, George Fox was confined for six months at Derby, “in a lousy, stinking place, without any bed, among thirty felons.” Let any person read the account he gives of the dungeon wherein he lay at Launceston, and he will hardly believe that such dreadful cruelties and oppressions could even then have been practiced in England, the boasted land of liberty and Christianity.

This place was so noisome, that according to common observation, few ever came out of it in health. It was over the shoes in mire of the most filthy description, and had not been cleaned for years. And though the liberty was entreated for, it was long before Friends were permitted to cleanse it themselves. They were allowed neither beds nor straw to lie on. And this was not sufficient cruelty upon the Friends; but the prisoners lodging over head, encouraged by the jailer, poured filth through the floor on the heads of those beneath. This dungeon was called Doomsdale, The head jailer had been a thief, and was burnt both in the hand and shoulder, and his wife in the hand; and the same distinctions had also been conferred on the under-jailer and his wife.

Numerous other instances might be adduced of the woful state of the prisons at the period we are now considering, and of the lamentable suffering, often to death, which Friends endured in them. It is, however, to the credit of the present more enlightened time, in which the successors of those sufferers may fairly claim their share of congratulation, that the state of the prisons is now widely different.

Some remarks have already been made, relative to the unsettled state of the government, at the period in which Friends were first gathered into a distinct church; and it has been hinted, that the political as well as the religious ferment, into which, from various causes, the whole community was thrown, was one source of the sufferings which this people had to endure. In addition to this, it cannot be concealed, whatever difference of sentiment may exist as to the propriety of the circumstance, that it was the zealous protest of Friends against the prevailing customs and character of the day, to which they were impelled from a sense of religious duty, that mainly laid them open to the persecutions which followed them in their course. But on the other hand, it may be said with equal truth, that the apostles and early Christians did the same thing, and had to endure a similar ordeal from rulers and others, who, in the darkness of their minds, were not able to admit the validity of that divine authority, under which true believers have always acknowledged them to have moved. They were said to turn the world upside down; and a charge of this nature necessarily attaches in a greater or less degree to reformers of every age and class. Believing, and that not without sufficient reason, in the divine mission of George Fox, William Dewsbury, and others associated with them, such will have no hesitation in asserting, that when those laborers were called into the Lord’s vineyard, they were furnished according to the service laid upon them.

The particular portion of labor which fell to their lot, was that of carrying on the great work of the reformation, in some points of religious faith, to a much further extent than was laid upon the reformers of the fifteenth century. And, although the early Friends were charged with being deniers of the Scriptures, because they preached boldly a revelation of divine knowledge to the mind of man, they

did this as moved by the holy Spirit, upon Scripture authority itself, and upon the ground of their own blessed experience. In the spiritual view which they were led to take of the Christian dispensation, they were indeed true believers in and supporters of the Scriptures; because they bore a fuller testimony to the scope and intent of those sacred writings. They not only acknowledged them, with as much sincerity as others, to be preeminently depositories of revealed truth, but they never shrunk from bringing those matters among the various sects which called for reformation, as well as their own doctrines and practices, to the test of Scripture, after the example of all true reformers. But in so doing, they were never suspected of an intention of overlooking the important fact, that the Sacred Volume itself needs a holy interpreter. Indeed, it was no other than this interpreter himself, as they believed, opening the Scriptures to the subjected understandings of the early Friends, that pointed out to them those things among the churches, which in that day required, and which still demand, the hand of reform, and against which they were called to bear so public and unflinching a testimony.

Nor were they left destitute of sufficient evidences of various kinds, spiritual, supernatural, and providential, intended no doubt for the confirmation of their belief, that the Lord himself was with them in their labors. In what manner the great work of individual repentance and regeneration was carried forward in their own minds, we have an instance before us in the case of William Dewsbury, who was only one among a large number, who were favored to arrive at the same enlarged experience. But “the evil heart of unbelief,” under very specious forms of reasoning, is at all times endeavoring to shake the faith of the weak and the unwary; often by insinuating, that the superstructure of the heavenly building is not to be of the same materials as the foundation. But this we know and are assured, is neither scriptural, nor was it the belief of the early Friends. The same divine work, according to what they learned and what they taught, requires at all times the same divine power to carry it on.

Time has made no such change of circumstances, as to invalidate the truth of this position. The natural man is the same in all ages; and he is not more able at one day than at another, to comprehend savingly the things of the Spirit of God, for they will ever continue to be “foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned.” In regard to the evidences above alluded to, and which are abundantly scattered through the writings of the early Friends, I introduce the following statement of facts from the pen of George Fox, to show the encouragement he derived from such experience as tell within the sphere of his own labors. He says,

Many great and wonderful things were wrought by the heavenly power in those days. For the Lord made bare his omnipotent arm, and manifested his power to the astonishment of many; by the healing virtue whereof, many have been delivered from great infirmities, and the devils were made subject through his name; of which particular instances might be given, beyond what this unbelieving age is able to receive or hear. But, blessed forever be the name of the Lord, and everlastingly honored, and over all exalted and magnified be the arm of his glorious power, by which he has wrought gloriously; and let the honor and praise of all his works be ascribed to him alone.

The preceding quotation is no enigma; it bears a faithful testimony to the facts of that day, although neither he, his companions, nor their successors in belief, have ever laid great stress on such occurrences however true; and have avoided insisting on them as proofs of their ministry. And although Friends in the early times did, with George Fox and with William Dewsbury, as the reader will find when he arrives at the closing scene, acknowledge such instances of the marvelous extension of divine regard to be consistent with Scripture and sound reason, they concluded it to be proper in these latter ages of the church, to receive them simply as collateral assurances, that the Lord's power is the same in one day as another, rather than as essential evidences or as requisite fruits of true faith.

Many have found it difficult to reconcile the bold and inflexible conduct of the early Friends, in bearing their open and public testimony against the errors of the prevailing sects and parties in religion, as though none were right but themselves. That this was actually the case with William Dewsbury, we shall see when the transactions of his life are further laid open before us; and it was the same with George Fox, and with the Friends in general. There is little doubt, but that such as were well satisfied with the established religion, or such as had dissented from it into various sects and shades of difference, must have thought it highly obtrusive and presumptuous in any, though not altogether without precedent, thus publicly to call in question their principles or practices, especially if those persons were in the majority of instances but simple, illiterate men. Neither do I wish to be understood as justifying every act which was the product of their generally well-directed zeal. But I am ready to affirm it as my belief, that the manner of their appearance was well suited to their day; that the amount of the benefit to the nation and to the church, resulting from their labors and sufferings, has never yet been fully calculated, and that they were the means of establishing certain precious principles in the minds of men, for which, the more they become developed in practice, the greater will be the gratitude of mankind. The question therefore, in regard to their early practices, is not as to what might be agreeable or seem decorous or otherwise; but whether the Lord of the vineyard, did or did not, see it fit to send laborers into his vineyard after such a peculiar manner; and whether he did, or did not, require this especial service at their hands, however repulsive their appearance might be to the carnal and hypocritical professors of those times. Many of these professors were very soon manifested not to be what they would pass for, some by the eager persecution they raised against the truth, others by their cowardly compliances to shun persecution. On the other hand, we know beyond contradiction, that under this ministry, unmodish and unacceptable as it was to the worldly-minded, thousands were turned from the evil of their ways; for we are informed by the testimony of authenticated records, which the whole history of the Society proves, that such a wonderful power attended the early preaching of this people, as for hundreds to be overcome by it at one time, and to be convinced of the truths which they heard. So that unpleasing as such instances of interference might be to the natural, impatient, unregenerate mind, the true Christian, the spiritual man, can have no doubt that the ministry of this people was a fresh display of that dispensation, which is love from God to his creatures.

We have seen under what kind of impressions William Dewsbury moved, in various instances, from very

early life, and how by revelation the mystery of unrighteousness, and the mystery of the Gospel, which is according to godliness, was made known to him; and by what means he became an able minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit. When he received, what he most surely believed to be, and what the event proved without contradiction, to be a divine gift and call to the work of the ministry, the word to him was, "What I have made known to you in secret, that declare you openly." If under such clear impressions of duty, and it was equally the case with others his brethren, these men went forth, as with their lives in their hands, to publish the Gospel of peace, to show the people their errors, and to make known to them what they themselves had both seen, and tasted, and handled of the word of life, it requires considerable caution how we permit our preconceived notions, or our unsubjected wills and reasonings, to rise up in judgment against such a dispensation.

Thus [as Sewel informs us,] it may be seen, by what means the Quakers so called, grew so numerous in those early times. As on one hand there were raised zealous preachers, so on the other there were abundance of people in England, who having searched all sects, could nowhere find satisfaction for their hungry souls. And these, now understanding, that God by his light was so near in their hearts, began to take heed thereunto, and soon found that this gave them far more victory over the corruption of their minds, under which they had long groaned, than all the self-willed worship which, with some zeal, they had performed for many years. Besides those who were thus prepared to receive a further manifestation of the way of life, there were also many, who being pricked to the heart, and by the Christian patience of the despised Quakers brought over, became as zealous in doing good as formerly they had been in working evil.

Perhaps some will think it was very indecent, that they, the Friends, went so frequently to the steeple-houses, and there spoke to the priests: but whatsoever any may judge concerning this, it is certain that those teachers generally did not bring forth the fruits of godliness. This was well known to those who themselves had been priests, and had freely resigned their ministry to follow Christ in the way of his cross. These were none of the least zealous against that society, among whom they had formerly ministered with upright zeal. Yet they were not for using sharp language against those teachers, who according to their knowledge feared God; but they leveled their aim chiefly against those who were rich in words only, without bringing forth Christian fruits and works of righteousness. Hence it was that Thomas Curtis, who was formerly a captain in the parliament army, but afterwards entered into the Society of the people called Quakers, wrote [as follows,] in a letter to Samuel Wells, priest of Banbury, and a persecutor:

"To your shame, remember, I know you to be scandalous. How often have you sat evening after evening at cards, sometimes whole nights, playing and compelling me to play with you for money; yet then you were called of the world a minister; and now are you turned persecutor, etc."

None, therefore, need think it strange that those called Quakers looked upon such teachers as hirelings. And that there were not a few of that sort, appeared plainly when King Charles II was restored. For, in many instances, those who had formerly cried out against Episcopacy, and its liturgy, as false and idolatrous, then became turncoats, and put on the surplice, to keep in possession of their livings and benefices. But by so doing, these hypocrites lost not a few of their

auditors; for this opened the eyes of many, who began to inquire into the doctrine of the despised Quakers, and saw that they had a more sure foundation, and that it was this that made them stand unshaken against the fury of persecution.

Chapter X

1655. Address to the nation—William Dewsbury often a prisoner—Discharged from Northampton jail—Warning to his persecutors and those in authority—Travels to London—Kent—Land's End—George Fox's labors in Cornwall—Humphrey Lower—William Dewsbury holds a meeting at his house—Foresees a storm—Soldiers arrest him at Torrington—Brought before the mayor—His treatment—Delivered out of their hands—Writes to the mayor—Proceeds into Somersetshire—Bristol—Wales—Epistle to Friends about Plymouth.

In William Dewsbury's collected works, under the date of 1655, we have an address to the people of England, containing the following paragraphs, which were thought to be worthy of the reader's attention.

O England, who lies in the fallen and lost estate, separated from the true and living God, by your iniquities, notwithstanding all your profession of his name in outward forms and observations; repent, repent, and turn unto the Lord God Almighty, who waits to be gracious unto you, and to make you the glory of all the nations of the world, if you will hearken diligently unto his counsel,—the light that is in the conscience of every one, to wait in it upon the Lord God, that he may guide you by his power.

And this which he has made known unto me concerning you, O England, I have to declare to you from the Lord. Certain years ago, when the everlasting covenant of life was confirmed to my soul in the Lord Jesus Christ, with the assurance, that I should go with the ransomed of the Lord to Zion, I inquired of my God, to manifest unto me where Zion was, that I might return there to worship him in spirit and in truth;—there being so many confused cries in you, who profess to worship the only true God, some saying, 'Lo, here is Christ,' in the Presbyterian practice, so called; and the Independent, so called, cries, 'Lo, he is here;' and the Anabaptist, 'Lo, he is here;' and others in outward forms, cry saying, 'He is here.' As Christ foretold, that the time would come when they should say, 'Lo, here is Christ, and lo there;' so it is fulfilled in you. But Christ says, 'Believe them not, go not forth, for the kingdom of heaven is within:' and, 'as the lightning that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines even unto the other part under heaven, so also shall the Son of man be in his day'—and this I witness. And while I was waiting on my God, to make known to me where Zion was, the word of the Lord came unto my spirit, that Christ was not divided, and that there was no rent in his garment; for the Lord is one and his people one: and that all your outward forms of worship, O England, where you are waiting for Christ in observations, are contrary to his will. For Christ says, 'the kingdom of God comes not

with observation,’ or as the margin has it, ‘with outward show,’ ‘neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for the kingdom of God is within you.’ And all your strict observing of your outward forms, is but imitating the saints’ practices, in the Babylonish and heathenish wisdom. So there is nothing but confusion in you, and all your outward forms are the outward court, which is without the temple, that the angel was not to measure: for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot. And this was made known unto me from the Lord my God, to be the estate and condition you do stand in, O England, in your outward forms and observations:—‘having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.’

Lo, under all your profession, is most cruel oppression; every one, according to their power, oppressing another, from the highest unto the lowest. So that the cry of the oppressed Seed, within the hearts of your inhabitants, and of those that are oppressed in outward oppressions of you, has entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth; and he is coming in power to set the oppressed free, and to bring them to Zion: which, in the riches of his love, he made known to me, and where Zion was, according to the desires he had raised in my heart. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, I will gather my people out of all forms and observations, and out of all kindreds, tongues, and nations, and I will pour my spirit upon them, and purge away their filth with the spirit of judgment and of burning: and I will write my law in their hearts, and put my spirit in their inward parts, and they shall not depart from me; but shall be bound up in union with me, in the free covenant of life in the Lord Jesus, and one with another in the one spirit, so shall the Lord be one, and his people one.

And this is Zion, the city of the living God, to which all the promises of the Lord are, according to the Scriptures of truth; wherein they need not ‘teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.’

Therefore mind the light in your consciences; diligently hearken unto it, and it will smite your image of forms and observations, and break it to pieces; and will rend off all your coverings of outward profession, and will let you see that the woe is unto them who are covered, but not with the Spirit of the Lord. To the light in your consciences I appeal, which will witness me. If you hearken unto it, to be guided by it, you will never find rest in outward forms and observations, but in putting off the body of sin, through the obedience of the spirit; ‘that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in you, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.’ ‘For they that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.’ And the body is dead in regard of sin, but the spirit is alive unto righteousness. And this you must witness, or else all your religion is vain, and your souls will perish.

So very large a portion of William Dewsbury’s time was spent within the walls of prisons, that the materials from which a narrative of his life is to be composed, are necessarily very scanty, and in many instances the chain of events respecting him can alone be rendered complete, by the insertion of little more than dates gathered from epistles, which at various periods he addressed to his friends and to the churches. After his liberation from the fifteen months’ cruel imprisonment, which he endured in the

dungeon of Northampton jail, he was favored to enjoy a considerable respite from suffering in that way; which allowed him the opportunity of pursuing his religious duties, according as his great and good Master was pleased to lay them upon him. But previous to his deliverance from this confinement, he sent the following animated and solemn warning to such as were in authority, and involved in the guilt of those persecutions under which Friends were then suffering. It possesses the peculiar characteristics of the writer's mind, as strongly as anything which is the product of his pen.

To all you rulers and judges of the earth, who combine against the Lord and against his anointed, and lay your plots in the deep, and fetch your counsel out of the bottomless pit, that you may ensnare the righteous, whom the world in scorn calls Quakers;—who, in love to your souls, do warn you, as you will answer it before the Lord God of heaven and earth, to give over plotting against the righteous, and inventing evil devices against the innocent. For in the light you are seen, and your secret works of darkness are discovered. And, all you that will not take warning now, when the Lord calls you to turn to his light, but reject his counsel, and continue in the evil of your doings,—to you this is the word of the Lord,—‘your plots and counsels shall not prosper against the righteous; for he that sits in the heaven does laugh, the Lord shall have you in derision. For no plot shall prevail against Israel, nor unrighteous counsel stand before Zion's King, who will break you with a rod of iron, and dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel, you that plot against him to oppose him in his appearance in the hearts of his saints. For what you do to the least of these, you do it to me, says Christ; and it were better that a millstone were hanged about your neck, and you cast into the bottom of the sea, than to offend the least of those that believe in my name.’ From the Spirit of the Lord who will not always strive with man, you are once more warned, now, while you have time, to prize it; and turn to the light of Christ in your consciences, which lets you see the secret evil of your hearts. And wait in the light, for the power of Christ to destroy the wicked, plotting, inventing mind, and to guide you in the straight and narrow way of self-denial in the daily cross, and in perfect obedience to the law of God, lest you perish in your disobedience. For the Lord God of Israel is arising, to plead the cause of his persecuted and oppressed people, and to scatter as dust before the wind all their enemies that plot against them. For they that plot against the people of God and dig pits for them, shall fall therein themselves. No weapon formed against them shall prosper; for all shall know, that God is with his people, and that the King of glory, who is the strength of his people, dwells in Mount Zion, and of his dominion there shall be no end. In that day, both high and low, rich and poor, who slight the mercy of the Lord, and continue in enmity against him and his appearance in the hearts of his saints, will know, that what is declared to you from the righteous Seed, is to you the word of the Lord God. He that has an ear to hear let him hear.

It was in the twelfth month, 1655, that he obtained his liberty; and it is reasonable to conclude that no long time would elapse, before he proceeded to Wakefield to join his wife and children, after so long and so trying a separation. Friends in those days, however, may truly be said to have married as though they married not, and to enjoy as though they possessed not; so freely and so sincerely were they given up to serve the cause of Christ, We accordingly find William Dewsbury, in the third month following, at a meeting two miles from Northampton, no mention being made of his having returned home in the

interval. Here again, he narrowly escaped a prison, and was actually seized at the meeting in company with several other Friends, who were sent to the very dungeon he had himself so lately occupied, and were confined there a considerable time. Among these were John Crook, lately a justice of the peace, and Thomas Stubbs, a man of education, both persons of some account where they lived. On this occasion, William Dewsbury's detention was only temporary; he was soon dismissed.

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From the Editor.—Here a chasm of nearly a year intervenes in the biographical narrative, which the Editor will not attempt with any exactness to fill up. But, by a memorandum in the author's handwriting, it seems, that had he been spared to perfect his design, he would in this place have introduced some notice of the part taken by William Dewsbury in the affecting and disastrous affair of one who was a companion with him in labor and a brother beloved. The case of James Nayler is perhaps as widely known, both to the public at large and to the Society of Friends, as any circumstance in our history; and therefore much need not be here said on the subject itself. Enmity and prejudice, however, have contrived from that time to the present to raise false conclusions from, and even to misrepresent, the plain facts of the case, although explanations have been abundantly given forth, clearing the Society and their principles from the slightest implication in the whole matter. On this head, J. G. Bevan's *Life of James Nayler*, with a refutation of some of the more modern misrepresentations of Friends, may be consulted with advantage.

"James Nayler," says a judicious writer, in a note appended to G. Fox's Journal, "was a monument of human frailty. His gift in the ministry was eminent, his experience in divine things truly great. He fell through unwatchfulness, but was restored through deep sufferings and unfeigned repentance. His own writings are the most clear and lively description of the various dispensations he underwent: some of them deserve to be transmitted to the latest posterity." It has been said, that upon his restoration to the unity of his Friends, George Fox was with much difficulty reconciled to him. That this should have been the case, is not to be wondered at on several accounts;—and we may also remember, that the primitive believers could scarcely be prevailed upon to receive Saul, the persecutor, among them. From a letter now before the Editor, although without date, he is induced to consider William Dewsbury as a principal instrument in bringing this about. Speaking of a journey to London, and of the dealings of the Lord with him in the course of it, he says:—

[The Lord] hath restored many captives, and brought in many that were turned aside, in much brokenness of heart, in the sense of his mercy in their recovery. I was led of the Lord into London, according to his will, in the service he had determined at that time in that place. I was much filled with comfort, to behold his appearance among his people, who did mightily refresh his babes with his own presence. The Lord laid it upon me, that dear George Fox and James Nayler might meet together: my travail was great in spirit, until the Lord answered; which, in the day he determined, was done: mighty was his majesty among his people, in the day he healed up the breach, which had been so long to the sadness of the hearts of many. The Lord clothed my dear brethren,

George Fox, Edward Burrough, and Francis Howgil, with precious wisdom; his healing spirit did abound within them, with the rest of the Lord's people there that day, according to their measure: and the Lord was with James Nayler, and ordered him by his spirit, so that the measure of the Lord's Spirit in all, reached to embrace it with gladness of heart. Then I was set free to pass from London, through Surrey, and so to Bristol, to be there the first-day after, being the 5th day of the twelfth month.

Before giving the reader further extracts from this letter, relative to Bristol, it will be proper to add something as to William Dewsbury's conduct and dealing with James Nayler himself. A very judicious communication from the former of these Friends to the latter, with the reply of the latter, is now in the possession of the Editor; by which it appears, that William Dewsbury had watched over and yearned towards his offending brother, and had seen with clearness the steps by which he had fallen, and the subtle snares which Satan had laid for his feet. These he traces out to him, reminding him how it had been with him in the hour of his temptation, and telling him where it was the enemy had got entrance, so as to prevail over him and others—how they had given way to a spirit of self-exaltation, by not abiding in the truth, nor in the light, nor in the grace by which we are saved, and by which alone the soul can be kept out of the reach of all delusion, deceits, and vain imaginations: and from an undue admiration and respect of persons, how they had proceeded to cry out against those who kept their habitations in the power of God; and at length to separate themselves from such, and to gather adherents about them, to the stumbling of many whose faces were set towards Zion, the saddening the hearts of the Lord's upright children, and causing his holy name to be blasphemed. He speaks of having been moved to come to London in the Lord's service; and that when there, he had sent for those who had so run out:—

In tender love to their souls, I ministered to them, to clear their understandings where they were to return, that God might heal them; on which, some of them, with others in Essex and Norfolk, were bowed down while they were with me; and I am clear of their blood, whom in tender love I have followed, to gather them as a hen does gather her chickens under her wings. But if they will not hear, and return to the light, to wait in it to be restored, their blood be upon their own heads, with all the unclean spirits that gathered shelter to themselves under you, in their impudent wickedness, to withstand the counsel of God, they hoping you will own them in what they do; which gives them strength desperately to strive in a masterly spirit, and with feignedness in all subtlety, to utter words and work lying wonders, to the grieving of the righteous souls and burdening the Seed of God. If they do not return to the Lord, to receive an understanding, and to walk with him in faithfulness to his counsel, they shall certainly wither and perish; the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, whose spirit will not always strive with man. And if you allow them in their deceit, as you have, and do not reprove them, their blood will lie heavy upon you, and you will not be clear.

Dear James, I beseech you, in tender love in the Lord Jesus, wait singly in his counsel, to give you an understanding to discern the working of this deceitful spirit. Notwithstanding all feignedness, that ground is to set up a master in the earth, and so make strife among brethren. The Lord God has turned his hand against them,

and will overturn them, and all that join with them in that deceitful ground. As the Lord gives you discerning, and moves you in his everlasting strength, arise and judge that deceitful spirit that has caused the truth to suffer, and has wronged you, then will the Lord give you dominion over it; so will you be clear of their blood, and there are some of them God will restore again, they waiting in the light to be cleansed through judgment. And what has been done in the hour of temptation, let the light and life judge it out; that in the light and life of our God, the whole body may grow in the unity of the spirit, to bear one another, serve one another, build up one another; that among all, there may not be any master but Christ, our head.” He adds, “many wait to hear of your being raised up in the light and life, to judge down and reign over this spirit, that has and does seek to make disorder and strife among brethren.

This affecting address closes with these pious exclamations in prayer:—

God Almighty! restore to a pure understanding all those that have been veiled; in your life, keep them in unity with all your elect, to serve you with faithfulness unto the end. Amen!

James Nayler’s reply manifests throughout, as clear and becoming a frame of mind as could be desired.

* * *

To return to Bristol. On the first Friends visiting this place, there were great disturbances from the rabble, incited by the priests, and encouraged by the magistrates, as Sewel and others relate. This, it is presumed, was at furthest only two years previous to William Dewsbury’s coming there; and his letter in a lively manner conveys a picture of those times, and of the preservation and strength vouchsafed to the Lord’s faithful little ones.

The sixth and seventh days before we came there, the apprentices, with the rude people, were running with naked swords in their hands up and down the streets, so thronged that it was hard to pass through them. On the first-day I was at the meeting: the Lord chained them all down with his Almighty power, in which the meeting was precious, and his people, comforted with living refreshings in his presence, were preserved quiet, in peace, and without the least disturbance. At night, there was a meeting at Dennis Hollister’s; many of the rude people with their swords stood in the streets, where they could hear; the Lord kept them quiet; Friends passed through them, when they gathered, and did not receive any harm. The next day they were more rude than formerly, some beating their masters, and not allowing the shops to be opened, threatening Friends who opened theirs, not regarding the mayor or any of his officers, but did what was permitted, as they saw good in their own eyes; many times running into Friends houses, in this time of the tumult, but had not power, when they came, to do any harm. In the height of their madness, the rulers hearing of a meeting on the third-day of the week, being the 7th of the month, at Edward Pyott’s, gave out openly among the people in the city, that they would come and break it up. When we were met together in the name of the Lord, some of them prepared to come; one swearing, and blaspheming the name of the Lord God of heaven and earth, said, he would cut the Quakers as small as

herbs for the pot; and in order to perform his bloody intent, he went for the guard to take a halbert, that he might satisfy his bloodthirsty spirit. The God of our safety allowed it to be, that they of the guard would not let him have the halbert; so strife rose among them, and the pit he dug he fell into, for he was run through the body; so God prevented their bloody intent. The meeting was precious in the life of our God, in which Friends parted with joy in the Lord. The rude people were full of madness, and hearing of the largeness of the meeting, they called one to another, to kill Friends as they went in at the gates; but the Lord prevented them, so that Friends received no harm. The Lord bound the hands of the wicked; still the envy remained in them, and they were full of madness, that they had missed the opportunity in which they intended to do such mischief. They came in the night season, about the eighth hour, to Edward Pyott's, certain Friends being there, some out of New England, who were banished from their wives and children upon pain of death. We were bowed down before our God, and prayer was made unto him, when they knocked at the door: it came upon my spirit, it was the rude people, and the life of God did mightily arise, and they had no power to come in, till we were clear before our God. Then they came in, setting the house about with muskets and lighted matches; and after a season, they came into the room where I was, and Amos Stoddard with me. I looked upon them when they came into the room, on which they cried out, as fast as they could well speak, 'We will be civil, we will be civil:' I spoke these words, 'See that you be so.' On this, they ran forth of the room, and came no more into it, but ran up and down the house with their weapons in their hands. And the Lord God, who is the God of his seed, against whom no weapon that is formed shall prosper further than he sees shall be for his glory, and the comfort of his people, caused their hearts to fail; and they passed away, and not any harm was done to any of us; blessed be the God of our safety! The next day, it was upon me to go to Bristol, and walk in the streets among the throng of them, D. H., E. P., and Thomas Gouldney being with me. We passed to George Bishop's, and came through where they were gathered together: the majesty of our God struck their hearts, and they all stood gazing upon us: little was spoken, but some said, 'That is one of the Quaker preachers.' So we had a precious time with Friends, and I passed away with much clearness and freedom from the city of Bristol, Friends being very precious in the dominion of the life of God, in which they eyed his mercy, who had brought up John Audland and certain brethren among them, to strengthen them to stand under these trials.

The 10th day of the month, we crossed the water into Wales: Friends in general are pretty well as we pass. The 24th, we came to a meeting near Leominster; and the 26th, to Worcester. The night before we came in, the rude people were up in much madness, making fires in the streets, and the soldiers suppressing them. The night we came in, they rose in great rudeness, so that the soldiers, the mayor, and the rulers of the town were up much of the night to suppress them. The God of our safety preserved us, and a peaceable meeting we had, which continued many hours, and the presence of the Lord was mightily among his people. The next morning Friends met at the meeting place about the eighth hour; the Lord preciousy satisfied the desires of his people with his presence, in which we parted one from another.

We came to Tewkesbury where there was a serviceable meeting in the evening, certain Friends being there, who did minister as the Lord moved. Walter Jenkins, a Welchman, in whom the power of the Lord is moving, has

been pretty much with me; as you are free you may write to him, he may be of good service among the Lord's people in Wales, he abiding in the life, to be led by it. A large meeting there was the 28th day of the month, three miles from Tewkesbury, and the Lord's presence refreshed his people; this day a meeting at Evesham, and the next day at Shipston, if God permit; further, as the Lord orders in his will. God Almighty be with you, your family, with all the faithful; and the Lord with his heavenly presence comfort the hearts of all that love him, and wait in uprightness of heart to do his will.

—W. D.

P. S.—Remember me to Robert Widders and John Audland; as freedom is, you may let them know how it is with the Lord's people at Bristol and hereaway.

On the 9th of second month, 1657, William Dewsbury dates an epistle from London; [but before this, a letter to Margaret Fell conveys, that he had been through Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex on his way. Few particulars are entered into; but he states, that he found Friends in their measures precious grown in the life, and that there was a great people in those parts.—*Editor.*] Arrived in London, he appears to have tarried something short of six weeks, and then moved forward into Kent; from which district, in an epistle dated the 22nd of third month, he gives the following hints on spiritual obedience, and the exercise of gifts in order to the ministry.

I lay it upon you, wait for the Lord to seal unto you his mind, that in his movings you may answer his will in word and works. The light will guide you to know the intent of every motion, that in it you [may] stand approved in the integrity of your hearts to God. And every one in particular, be faithful in the power of God, that in all the movings of the spirit of life, the earthly wisdom with all its reasonings and consultings be judged out; and all may know the new man in Christ, and the new bottle that preserves the new wine, which is committed to you in the kingdom of God, to refresh your souls and make them glad in his presence; and so minister in his living power and wisdom, to the refreshment of the weary and oppressed soul, with the comfort of the spirit of life, in which your souls are made glad in God. So will you all come to the pure ministry in the life. And as you are moved of God, be faithful; strangle not the birth, neither quench the movings; and in the presence of the Lord, I warn you, wait for an understanding in the life to lead you. Neither add to, nor diminish; so will death with all its formality be kept out from among you.

[Of his visit to Kent, the only additional vestige is gleaned from the communication to Margaret Fell, mentioned above, the date of which is near Sandwich, the 3rd of fourth month. He says, that he has had large meetings since coming into the county, and that “the power of the Lord broke in upon many of them;” also of his having been on board a vessel in the Downs, in which were a number of Friends, men and women, bound for New England in the service of the Gospel: he says, they were bold in their measure in the power of God; and adds, “his everlasting presence keep them in the unity of the life, and prosper them in his work.” The master of the vessel, Robert Fowler, afterwards gave some account of the hand of

Providence being with him in his voyage, which was called “A Quaker’s Sea Journal,” and was printed. In it, he makes mention of the refreshment they had from the company of William Dewsbury, and that he recommended them to the grace of God.—*Editor.*]

From Kent he traveled westward to the Land’s End, preaching the word of eternal life through the southern counties. There is no account preserved, of how or where he was particularly occupied between the above date and that of the 17th of seventh month, when he writes a letter from the Land’s End, in which he relates the particulars of some trials that befell him previous to his reaching that part of the country.

The year previous to William Dewsbury’s arrival in Cornwall, George Fox had traveled through most parts of that county; so that the ground was already broken up for succeeding laborers. “Great,” says the former, “was the service of my God in that country.” On the first-day of the week, being the 27th of the month, he was at a meeting at Humphrey Lower’s, who had formerly been a justice of the peace. He was one of the many who had been convinced by George Fox while prisoner in Launceston jail, where the latter suffered nine months’ confinement, part of the time under the most revolting circumstances, in the dungeon of the prison which was called Doomsdale, some particulars of which have been before related. This Humphrey Lower, George Fox describes as “a grave, sober, ancient man,” who among others went to visit him while a prisoner there, and was thoroughly convinced, and so continued to his death. It was at his house that William Dewsbury’s meeting was held; and he was a near neighbor to the high-sheriff of the county, a man, as William Dewsbury writes, “who was wicked against the truth of our God.” “It was said, he threatened to break up the meeting; but in the power of my God I did stand, which chained him, and the meeting continued precious in the Lord.” On the 29th, William Dewsbury was at a meeting at Launceston; after which he pursued his journey into Devonshire, his mind having been strongly impressed with an apprehension, “as the Lord had let him see,” that he should meet with a storm in that county, or near it: which in fact took place at Torrington. There he was arrested, and under a guard of soldiers, was brought before the mayor and other functionaries, who had imbibed the persecuting spirit of the day. “Some of them,” says he, “were very cruel and wicked against the truth of God, and did deal very rudely with me. In great wrath they took my hat off my head, and threw it on the ground, and committed me to prison, where I was two nights and near three days.” He was many times brought before them, and they accused him of being a Jesuit and a foreigner, and read to him many new laws, threatening to proceed against him as a vagabond: “in which,” says he, “the Lord reigned over them.” They then read him the oath of abjuration, the common snare with which Friends were caught at that time; and they told him he must take it. This he refused to do, on account of the testimony he had to bear against all swearing under the Gospel, no less against the pope and all idolatry, than the other points embraced by the oath.

On the second day of his examination, towards night, he was brought forth, and they inquired of him how he became a minister of Christ; which subject had been before alluded to. It appears to have been a mystery to them, how a man could be in the way of his duty in leaving his wife and children in the north of England, “to preach the word of eternal life through the southern counties unto Cornwall.” And when,

in answer to their questions, he “was free in the Lord to declare to them how he came to be a minister of Christ,” they were so cut to the heart, that one of the justices wept, and the clerk said, “If you had spoken thus much before, here had not been this to have done.” But there appears to have been great confusion of purpose and difference of sentiment among the magistrates, so that Dewsbury attempting to speak further on the subject was not allowed. Others offended at his hat, stormed against him for having it on, and he was sent again to prison. “Many times,” says he, “I was brought before them, to see if they could ensnare me. But in the wisdom of God, I stood innocent.” The case was difficult, and there was a power among them to which they were unwilling to be subject, yet were unable to control. For although they made out a court order to commit the prisoner to the common jail at Exeter, they were so divided that some of them objected to his going there; but the mayor, “he who had the chief rule,” told him, he should not see his face any more until he was before the judge at the next assize at Exeter. “Do with me what you have power to do, my innocence will plead for me,” replied Dewsbury; and he was remanded to prison, where he lay on the bare floor; remaining in this condition till the 2nd day of the eighth month.

“I was then,” says he, “brought before them. My God had pleaded my cause, and changed the heart of man, which failed in them. For the man who said I should see his face no more, until I was before the judge at Exeter, pulled the court order in pieces before my face, and said to me, ‘You are free.’ So did my God set me free, out of the hands of unreasonable men, according to his promise made to me; praises to his name forever.”

Before he left Torrington, he addressed a close and faithful letter to the mayor of the town, telling him, that he and others in commission had abused their power, and turned their hands against the innocent; “whom,” says he, “you wounded as much as you could: in the fear of God consider what you have done. Is this the fruit of your fasting and humbling yourselves, as you say; when you have done, to smite with the fist of wickedness, and instead of entertaining strangers, to use them so barbarously?” “An account you must give to the Judge of heaven and earth.” He then refers to some of the latter portions of the 25th chapter of Matthew, telling them, it will be in vain to say, “When did we see you hungry, and fed you not,” etc. inasmuch as they did it not to the least of the brethren; and he calls upon them to prize their time, and not to slight the day of God’s mercy:—to incline their ear to his counsel, the divine light in their consciences, that would discover to them the evil of their hearts, and their unjust proceeding against innocent men; that so the Lord might give them repentance unto life, lest otherwise they should perish in the day of his fierce wrath, when he will recompense to every man according to his works: and finally takes his leave, by expressing his desire, that the Lord would not lay what they had done against him to their charge.

Having thus regained his liberty, he proceeded without delay on his journey into Somersetshire; and, on the 4th of the eighth month, was at a large meeting in that county and tarried a night in Ilchester jail, with Thomas Salthouse and others, who were imprisoned there; the next day going forward into Wiltshire, where he held another meeting. On the 11th, being the first-day of the week, he was at a meeting which

was thought to be attended by two thousand persons: in reference to which, he says, “My God was mighty in his power, to the glory of his name.” He then passed through Gloucestershire, and so to Bristol, which he reached on the 18th of the month.

[It is not likely that the termination of his services on this journey was at Bristol; for, by a letter from his wife to a Friend, it would seem, that on the 28th of eighth month, he was intending to enter Wales. There is also a letter from himself, which, though it lacks a date, may be referred to this period; by an extract from it we may see how great his exercises and labors in this district must have been, and that they were “not in vain in the Lord,” his Guide, Counsellor, and Helper.

Our God in mercy is answering the prayers of his people, in bringing back again them that have been driven away in the hour of temptation, and now is seeking the lost, and restoring the scattered of the house of Israel. Many in Wales and elsewhere return, with brokenness of heart for what they have done against the Lord, and his servants; and God pardons them, and restores them in his mercy. And most of the meetings that were scattered, are in the mercy of our God established: many of them owned their condemnation openly, for what they had done against the Lord, to their shame and his glory, who prospers his work in his own hand, and with his outstretched arm glorifies his name, to our comfort, whom he has chosen to do his will, to his glory, who is worthy: blessed be his name forever!—*Editor.*]

The account of this journey shall be closed by the following epistle, dated Cornwall, 1657, which is now for the first time printed.

Brethren and sisters in the immortal Seed, whom the Lord has placed in and about Plymouth. The Lord in his tender love waits to make you a royal priesthood to himself forever. All watch in the measure of light, believing in it, that the Spirit of God [may] arise, to keep your minds stayed upon the Lord. There you will find the fountain of God’s living mercy opened to you all, refreshing your souls, and crowning his own Seed with dominion, to keep you fruitful in his life, to praise his name forever and ever! God Almighty keep you in unity in the immortal Seed, to serve the Lord with one consent, to the finishing of your course with joy, to the praise of his name. Even so be it with you, in the power of the Lord God! Amen.

—W. D.

When the church of the living God is met together, let this to be read in his fear.

Chapter XI

1658. William Dewsbury in Scotland—Epistle—Trials from false brethren—John Perrott’s case—

William Dewsbury's labors with these—Restoration of many—Self-renunciation required of Friends—William Dewsbury, at a meeting in Warwickshire—Disturbance and violent treatment of Friends—He is imprisoned in York Castle, with five hundred more, where five die—He is released—Writes Epistles of encouragement to Friends.

By the date of William Dewsbury's next epistle, we trace him to Scotland.

From the few scattered notices which are preserved of his labors in that nation, it appears that they were eminently blessed to the religious establishment of many persons, in whose hearts the work of preparation had been going on for several years. When Friends in the capacity of ministers had their steps first directed among the people of that nation, the word preached was truly glad tidings to their souls. We are informed by John Barclay, in his *Memoirs of Friends in Scotland*:—

In the south of Scotland, as in the north, there were individuals, whose minds had been for some years weary and heavy laden, under a sense of their manifold shortcomings, yet who believed there was to be known, a more purely spiritual way of worship, and of life and conduct, than that which they, or any with whose profession they were acquainted, had arrived at. Deeply burdened with the formality, superstition, and will-worship prevalent around them, and under which the various public preachers too generally detained their hearers, these serious inquirers had separated from the several congregations of the people; and at length some of them began to meet together by themselves, waiting upon God in a holy silence and awful humility of soul, for ability to draw nigh unto him in true spiritual worship. On these occasions, they were at times made sensible of the quickening virtue, power, and life of the holy Spirit, enabling some of them to speak forth the praises of the Almighty, and from an inward experience of his goodness, to extend instrumentally a hand of help to others.

“To a people thus situated, it appeared to be consistent with the mind of the great and good Shepherd to extend his merciful regard; and between the years 1653 and 1658, when William Dewsbury paid them his first visit, the feet of many Gospel messengers were turned in that direction. We are further informed in the Memoirs, that the Gospel messages of these, and other zealous witnesses, [who had already occupied the ground] reached the consciences of many who heard them; yet, with regard to Aberdeen and the district thereabouts, no open espousal of the tenets of the people called Quakers took place, until towards the end of the year 1662; when William Dewsbury was drawn in love to these prepared and panting souls, to proclaim among them ‘the acceptable year of the Lord,’ even deliverance from the bondage of corruption, by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Thus was the remarkable work of conviction, which had been secretly going on in some of their hearts for several years, through many deep conflicts of spirit, helped forward to such a point, that they were made willing, even in all things, to take up the daily cross, though in various respects as bitter as death, and to follow the guidance of Christ by his spirit within them, whithersoever he should be pleased to lead.”

Thus much is known of William Dewsbury's labors as regards Aberdeen. But the epistle above referred to is dated Leith, at an earlier period, namely, the 24th of the seventh month, 1658, and refers to his first

visit to Scotland, respecting which I have not been able to discover particulars from any other source than the epistle itself. On this account, and because of its intrinsic worth, I have concluded to lay it before the reader. It is as follows.

Dear Friends,

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ walk, so as to reign over all that is contrary to the light; that, in the light and glory of God, you may all shine forth, living witnesses of the name of the everlasting, holy, pure God, who has looked upon you in his tender love, to gather you to stand against all deceit, in his everlasting power. Blessed are you who are faithful in obeying the light of Christ, who follow him in the cross and the straight way of self-denial. You are my brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, our Captain. He will crown you with his mighty power to stand over all [temptations] to follow him in faith and patience, until every tongue that lifts up itself against you, shall fall in judgment, together with all that stumble at Christ Jesus, our light and life, who will gather a large people to himself. In that country, many shall come in, who are yet wandering upon the mountains, where they find no rest. Blessed are all you that abide and walk faithfully with the Lord, whom he has called and chosen to be the first fruits. Whatever arises contrary to the light, within or without, watching in the light, you will discern; stay your hearts upon the Lord, holding fast your confidence in him. He will deliver you out of all that is contrary to the light, and cause you to rejoice in the daily cross, crucifying you to the world and the world to you. Over the world He will cause you to rejoice, and you shall stand over it in the power of God, with all its pomps and glory, and the evil therein, to his praise and glory. Even so be it with you all, in the mighty power of God, in which my soul salutes you that faithfully and humbly walk before the Lord, in obedience to his counsel.

Dear lambs, called to lie down in the safe fold of rest, in Christ our life, in tender love I beseech you, that you be faithful in meeting together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and diligently watch to know your own measure of grace in Christ, to feel him in you to judge your thoughts, and every vain imagination, that you may reign over them, and delight in the refreshing of his presence. And all take heed of many words; at all times let them be few, and from the savory spirit of life, in Christ. In him, the blessing of the Lord rest on you all forevermore; there to farewell with me in the everlasting love of the Father in Christ, Amen.

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY.

Let copies of this be carefully written and sent to the churches, to be read among them, when they are met together in the fear of God.

[Since this volume has been in the Editor's hands for publication, he has met with a letter written by William Dewsbury, from the same place, Leith, only the day before the above communication was penned: it is addressed to Margaret Fell, and is as follows.]

TO MARGARET FELL

In the everlasting power and life in Christ, the light and righteousness, over all God blessed forever!—in his power, which keeps the faithful, dear sister, I have been and am refreshed in my travails, which in measure you know what they are, for the Seed's sake. Dwell in the power, in which the Lord has chosen you to bear his name in righteousness; even so the Almighty God keep you, your tender children and family a refreshing to the Israel of God. My dear sister, your care I have often felt, bearing the burden for the Seed's sake, and much for the poor oppressed seed in Scotland; the care of which has been much upon me. My tender Father, after six years' travel in England, has freed me to come into Scotland, which was on the 13th day of the sixth month. At Berwick I left my horse, and one Samuel Thornton was moved to come with me. I bought shoes at Berwick, and came on foot into Scotland with great joy. On the first day's journey, I met with hundreds of people, it being the time of harvest, who in the fields and highways heard the truth in much tenderness. The 15th, being the first-day of the week, I was at the meeting at Edinburgh—I stayed three meetings; God much appeared to his own glory. The 19th day, I journeyed towards the west; the 22nd day, being the first-day of the week, I was with Friends at Badcow, through the country to the garrison of Air; the 29th I came to the meeting of Friends at Heads; Friends in measure are come into the simplicity of the Truth. Then I journeyed to Hamilton, Glasgow, Stirling, and to the castle of Bandallo. In the fields and highways, many hundreds heard the word of eternal life, many being very tender where I have been led. The 12th of the seventh month, being first-day, I returned to Edinburgh, where I have had many meetings and pretty many came: here has been as yet no opposition, the Lord has much appeared, many clearly convinced of the Truth; Carttan is resolved to follow the Lord in obedience; he is of the baptized people.

Dear sister, in a short time, the Lord led me on foot, some hundreds of miles with much joy, for the Seed's sake; my bread I am casting on the waters, assured I am, I shall find it in the time appointed.

The everlasting God keep all in his power and wisdom, every one in their places, to his praise and glory. Amen!

Farewell! your dear brother,

—W. D.

From the date of another of his epistles, we learn that William Dewsbury was in London in the eleventh month, 1659. This year was one of cruel persecution to the Society of Friends, then rising into considerable importance, through the diligence of the numerous laborers engaged in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God. The boldness with which they asserted their peculiar belief, together with the power which attended their preaching, tended greatly to add to their numbers, notwithstanding their suffering lot, and the persecutions which awaited them. It is however evident, from some of the epistles of this Friend, both of early and later date, that all who were convinced of the truth, did not abide faithful to their testimony.

Notwithstanding the address, which William Dewsbury with so much wisdom made to the Society as early as 1653, on the subject of discipline, no regular system appears to have been organized previous

to the year 1666; when it was accomplished under the zealous, enlightened, and judicious exertions of George Fox, who believed himself to have received an especial call to proceed with that work. In the meantime, as already related, some attempts were made to meet the exigencies that arose; and it does appear from an answer which William Dewsbury returns to an adversary, who had opposed him in some of his writings, that the address in question had subsequently been followed up, either by the regular appointment of overseers, or by the exercise of that office. It was however too much to expect, without something more than ordinary to account for it, that a society so numerous and so extensive as Friends had now become, should conduct its affairs in all respects harmoniously, or remain wholly free from the incursions of that spirit, which by means of his agents takes pleasure in sowing discord among brethren. Accordingly, about this time, one John Perrott became the author of much confusion in this Society; more especially among those, who, having recently joined it, were but weak in the faith. Of this number, I find the truly honorable name of Thomas Ellwood; and from whose journal, such information may be gathered on the subject, as is proper to precede the relation of some facts, which William Dewsbury has left us in one of his epistles relative to the part he took in the affair.

John Perrott joined the people called Quakers, about the year 1658, and being of a forward, conceited, and what may be truly called a fanatical spirit, he soon took upon himself the ministerial office; and being great in his own opinion, nothing less would serve him than to attempt the conversion of the pope. Soon after his arrival at Rome, he was cast into Bedlam, and his companion Luv, or Love, as George Fox writes his name, into the Inquisition. The reputed madman, though not the best man, had the better chance, as it turned out, for he lived, and succeeded in returning to England, while the other died in prison, not without well-grounded suspicions of having been murdered.

On his return to England, Perrott, by magnifying his sufferings and putting on the appearance of great sanctity, so won upon the tender and compassionate feelings of Friends, as to procure a place in their affection and esteem which he in no wise deserved. This made way for propagating his peculiar error, of keeping on the hat during public or private prayer. Improbable as it may appear at this day, many sincere minds were taken with the bait, and great confusion was the result. Ellwood, with all the ingenuousness of a man of real worth, relates his own case with full confessions of his error, which he publicly condemned.

In an epistle addressed by William Dewsbury, “to all the faithful in Christ,” etc., bearing the date of 1663, he thus describes the progress of this error, as it took possession of the minds of those who were the leaders in its propagation.

In that which tries and weighs your own spirits, in coolness and singleness of heart, try and taste what spirit they are of who come among you at this day; wherein many come forth with us as to the owning of truth in their judgments, who regulate the outward man in some respects like the children of truth. Some of them have felt the stroke of the judgment of the Lord [for sin,] which has caused them to forsake some things in which

formerly they delighted; and in some measure of zeal they have borne a testimony to the light, enduring stripes and imprisonments, both in this nation, and some beyond the seas. While they stood in the fear of the Lord, he for his name's sake delivered them from the winter storms they suffered under; yet for lack of watchfulness, the mystery of iniquity has wrought and drawn them from the light into the pride of their hearts, to deck themselves with the jewels and gifts, which the Spirit of God gave unto them when they were humbled before him. But, departing from the redeeming judgment of God, the deadly wound was healed again, and instead of giving glory to God for their deliverance, they in this time of rest, took their flight as on the sabbath day, upon the mountains of high imagination, and did sacrifice on the high places... And having gone from the light, they neither regarded the glory of God nor the good of his people.

Such as these became a source of much trouble and concern to their brethren; and after having succeeded in unsettling the minds of many, fell off from the body, drawing away their adherents after them. Further on, in the same epistle, the author writes as follows:

Oh! how did my bowels yearn for the preservation of John Perrott, in doing what I could, to draw and separate him from that spirit which gave forth the paper that propagated the keeping on of the hat in prayer, and reflected upon those that called upon the name of the Lord with their heads uncovered. But after much counseling of him in tender love, to stop that paper from going abroad, but he would not be separated from that spirit that gave it forth, I cleared my conscience in the word of the Lord. And now, in my freedom in God, I declare to the children of Zion, what the judgment is that did arise in my heart, to this purpose:—

John, if you propagate what you have written in this paper, you will wound more hearts, and cause more trouble of spirit among the tender-hearted people of the Lord, than when the temptation entered James Nayler: who deeply suffered, but the Lord restored him again by true repentance. And as to my particular, it is not my nature to be found striving with you or any upon the earth; but having declared the truth to you, I will return to my rest in the Lord; and let every birth live out the length of its day, and let time manifest what is born of God. For that spirit that stands up in self-striving, will weary itself, and die, and end in the earth. And this will certainly come to pass upon all those that do not diligently wait in the light, to judge the outgoings of their minds, [yielding] in true self-denial to be lead in the footsteps, where the flocks of Christ's companions delight to walk, serving one another in love, and every one with the spirit of love and meekness, seeking to restore another out of what any have done, through the violence of temptation or weakness.

Such was the amiable and discriminating line of conduct which William Dewsbury pursued, in the wisdom that was given him to rule in the church of God, and such the harmless and lowly authority which he exercised. Although, at this period, trials and afflictions sorely proved the Society from within, as did persecutions from without, there was from time to time a degree of faith administered to such steadfast spirits, as were numerous among Friends who were the laborers and sufferers of that day, which made them a match for every occasion wherein they were called to exercise it. In this faith, which is the saints'

victory, the same writer, in his address, proceeds to hand them the word of encouragement.

Dear brethren, though great be the wrath that withstands the work of our God, which wrath works openly and mysteriously, to lay burdens upon the innocent, and to add afflictions to the afflicted;—in the word of the Lord that arises in my heart, I declare, they shall but weary themselves, and all their hopes shall fail them, and their expectations shall come to naught, who wait for evil concerning you who love the Lord better than your lives, and delight in waiting to feel his power at all times, leading and ordering you in the bonds and within the limits of his spirit.

This subject must not be concluded, without presenting the reader with some further information, relative to the manner in which a very large proportion of those persons became disentangled, who had thus been taken in “the snare of the fowler.”—“A meeting was appointed to be held in London, through a divine opening in that eminent servant and minister of Christ, George Fox; for the restoring and bringing in again those who had gone out from truth and the holy unity of Friends therein, by the means and ministry of John Perrott.” This meeting, or rather these meetings, lasted whole days, and some who had run out from the truth and clashed with Friends, were reached by the power of the Lord; which came wonderfully over them, and made them condemn themselves, and tear their papers of controversy to pieces. George Fox, who relates the circumstance, had several meetings with them, and “the Lord’s everlasting power,” as he declares, “was over all, and set judgment on the head of that spirit in which they had run out. Some acknowledged that Friends were more righteous than they; and that if Friends had not stood, they had been gone, and had fallen into perdition. And thus, the Lord’s power was wonderfully manifested, and came over all.”

“In this manner,” Ellwood writes, “in the motion of life, were the healing waters stirred; and many through the virtue and power thereof were restored to soundness; and indeed, not many lost. And, though most of these, who thus returned were such as, with myself, had before renounced the error, and forsaken the practice; yet did we sensibly find, that forsaking without confessing, in case of public scandal, was not sufficient; but that an open acknowledgment of open offenses, as well as forsaking them, was necessary to obtaining complete remission.”¹

Besides an abatement of numbers in the Society, from the cause now described, it will not be difficult to believe, that while persecution did to a certain extent prevent its increase, there were those also to whom the way proved too narrow, as it involved greater sacrifices than they were willing to submit to. Without an unreserved dedication of soul, such as these would be not unlike the children of Ephraim, who, carrying bows, turned their backs in the day of battle. Although they might be said to have the weapons, the knowledge and the profession, yet lacking that living faith which could alone fortify them

1 *The Life of Thomas Ellwood*

with courage and endurance, they would be unable to stand the brunt of that fiery trial, which awaited the faithful servants of Christ. As our Lord said to his immediate followers, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," so it was with Friends in that day; there could be no reserves: those who were not prepared to part with all, even to the renunciation of lawful enjoyments, for the testimony of a pure conscience, in which the faith is preserved, could not abide the fiery trial of that time, but must fall back. Of this number was not William Dewsbury; he was ready at all times to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Such indeed was the deep and abiding effect of that sweet evidence of the love of God in Christ Jesus to his soul, with which the Lord was pleased to favor him previous to his venturing upon the work of the ministry, and such the evidences vouchsafed of the heavenly power that attended him and Friends, that according to a testimony which he bore when on his deathbed, he never afterward played the coward, but joyfully entered prisons as palaces, telling his enemies to hold him there as long as they could; and in prisons he sang praises to his God, and esteemed the bolts and locks put upon him, as jewels; "and in the name," says he, "of the eternal God, I always got the victory; for they could keep me no longer than the determined time." When at liberty, he was an indefatigable laborer in the cause which he had espoused with so much sincerity and zeal.

On one occasion, about this time, we find from *Besse's Collection of the Sufferings of Friends*, that he was at a meeting in Warwickshire, at the house of one William Reynolds, which was disturbed by a constable accompanied and assisted by a rude multitude, armed with swords and staves, who pulled the Friends out of the house, and having beaten and abused some of them, fell to breaking the windows in the constable's presence. These were the every day occurrences of those lawless and intolerant times.

Towards the close of the year 1660, William Dewsbury is to be traced to Ouse-bridge prison, in the city of York, to which he was committed in company with eleven others, among whom I find the name of William Tuke, for refusing to take the oaths, no doubt, of allegiance and supremacy. It may be here remarked, that the practice of that day, by which the dominant party forced these oaths upon the people, and thus through the frequent changes in the government made them to swear and forswear, was a sufficient reason with Friends for refusing to take them, independently of those strong objections which they entertained, on scriptural grounds, to all oaths, as unlawful under the Gospel dispensation. The truth had made them free from the necessity of oaths; they were an upright people; and for conscience sake, conducted themselves as such, both privately and to the government, so far as the laws of man did not infringe upon the paramount obligations of religious duty. And their words of promise were more binding to them, than the oaths of most other people.

From Ouse-bridge prison he was shortly after removed to York Tower, and from there to the castle, where, by the date of one of his epistles, I find him in the third month, 1661. Besse, from whom these particulars have been obtained, informs us, that the whole number of Friends imprisoned at one time in York castle, and other prisons in the county, in the two months of which he had been writing, was five

hundred and thirty-six, of whom five hundred and five were in the castle itself; where five died through the unhealthiness of the place.² William Dewsbury was not long detained in confinement after the above date; for in the postscript to an address, altogether worthy of a Christian minister, dated the 20th, which he wrote and found means of presenting to King Charles II, then newly seated on the throne; he informs the king, that before the document could be sent to him by a private and safe hand, he was set at liberty, with some others of his brethren, “by the late proclamation, which we own as an act of justice.” These latter are his own words.

The act just referred to, appears to have originated in the circumstance of Margaret Fell, the wife of Judge Fell, of Swarthmore Flail, appearing twice before the king, with a view to lay before him the grievous sufferings of Friends. This was about the time of the rising of the fifth monarchy men, in whose absurd views Friends, to their cost, were unjustly supposed to have participated. The object of Margaret Fell was much promoted, by an act of justice performed towards the Society in some of these unhappy and mistaken persons; who, before the sentence of the law was executed upon them, publicly cleared Friends of any participation or knowledge of their design.

George Fox also threw in his mite. He published a declaration against all sedition, plotters and fighters, asserting Friends to be a harmless people, whose principles were against wars and fightings. This timely act, appears to have had considerable weight with both the king and council in procuring the desired relief. William Dewsbury’s address to the king, will be introduced in a subsequent page; it is recommended to the notice of the reader, as a specimen of that true independence of mind, which Christianity in its genuine nature produces in the character of man.—[*See Appendix.*]

It has already been intimated, that while under confinement at York, William Dewsbury wrote several epistles of encouragement to be dispersed among Friends, exhorting them to steadfastness and faithful adherence to the testimonies which had been given them to bear, notwithstanding the trials and sufferings to which they were subjected. Among these, the following will serve as a specimen of his mind at this juncture.

2 It is not the Editor’s purpose here to enlarge on the subject of these lamentable facts, or he might readily produce a mass of evidence, in illustration of the cruelty and wrong inflicted upon the Society at large during this period. But an original letter of a Friend, addressed to George Fox, having come to his hand, dated from the place of William Dewsbury’s frequent allotment, “the dungeon of Warwick jail,” an extract may serve to show, that other places were not behind York, in the entertainment given to his suffering people.—“Dear George Fox, my love flows forth unto you in the pure, holy, immortal life; and Friends here, their dear love is to you, and our love to all faithful Friends in and about London. There are many of us here imprisoned in Warwick, to the number of one hundred and twenty, as near as we can judge of it, and among us some women Friends; and they continue going on in their persecution still. There were several more brought to prison this morning; and of what prisoners are at Coventry, and in another place in this county, we have not certain knowledge; but we heard, that there are above a hundred, besides ourselves, at Warwick. We that are here are kept close from coming one to another. There were some of our Friends, a little time since, put into a close cellar, where they had not room to lie one by another; and one of them being near dead for lack of room and air, was brought forth very weak; and he yet remains sick and weakly. This cruelty of the persecutors has caused a great cry against them from many in Warwick; since which time, they have removed the prisoners to a more convenient place; but they are there kept close, and there is little coming to them many times, but with much difficulty to bring us necessary things: but sometimes it is otherwise.” 6th of twelfth month, 1660.

Dear brethren and sisters in the church of the first-born,

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied in and among you, to whom God revealed what he determined and is now manifesting, that every one in the life of God might stand single, out of and over the snares of those whom God lays aside as the broken reeds of Egypt; that his own name might be trusted in, and his mighty arm alone seen and felt, in leading and preserving his people to his glory, as witnessed this day, blessed be the God of our strength and safety.

All dear and chosen vessels of God, whether in bonds or out of bonds, in the everlasting light and life stay your minds, and lift up your heads, and be strong in the name of the Lord. And fear not the wrath of man, for it is limited and shall turn to the praise of God forever; who is making up his jewels, and gathering his wheat into his garner, and the sheep of his pasture into the safety of his power, that he may lead them and save them with his outstretched arm, to the confounding of the heathen that know not God.

Dear Friends, gird up the loins of your minds, and in the faith and patience of Jesus stand still in the light, and see the salvation of God; who has caused the mountains and hills that withstood his glorious arising, to melt like wax, and to vanish as the untimely fruit. He has divided the waters and turned them on heaps, and has made a way through them for the ransomed ones to walk in his service, whereunto he has called them. He has made the weak as strong as David, before whom the uncircumcised has fallen, that resisted the God of Israel.

Dear Friends, let the love of God constrain you to trust in him; and feel the seed of God borne up over all, to feed on the bread of life; that you may live and rejoice over all hardships, and over all wrath. All, keep the word of faith in the power of God. The mountains shall fall before you more and more, and you shall tread down the pride of the perverse and froward generation, in the patience and dominion of God. And let the strong bear the burden of the weak: that all, in the unity of the spirit, in the power of the love of God, may grow up a holy priesthood, offering up souls and bodies a living sacrifice, in faithful obedience to do the will of God.

Dear Friends, in vain is it for man to strive to limit the Holy One of Israel, or his Spirit in his people. For if they that seek to oppress and destroy you, who love God more than anything in the world, yes, than life itself, were as the sand that is on the sea shore, fear not: comfort yourselves in the light of his countenance. For he will arise, and scatter in his wrath, all those that resist his spirit, as dust before the wind: and his righteousness will he establish in the earth forever.

O Zion, your God reigns! And you shall see your enemies come bending to the soles of your feet. Your renown shall go forth more and more over the earth, your leaves shall heal the nations which shall walk in your light; and you shall be known in all the earth to be the city of the most high God, yes, the righteous seed, when the faces of your enemies shall be covered with shame,—the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken it.

Let this be sent abroad among Friends with understanding in the fear of God.

—W. D.

York Tower, 19th of the Twelfth month, 1660

Thus was this dedicated servant of Christ, himself a prisoner for his testimony, enabled “in the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind,” to encourage the suffering flock. This was a time, when it may be said with much truth, that Friends were accounted as little better than sheep for the slaughter, and when their enemies seemed ready to swallow them up quick. We who live in this day of ease, have little conception of the amount and extremity of their sufferings, and have need to be cautioned against indifference. We should never forget, it was through the endurance of such wrongs as have now been related, though to a far greater extent, that our present degree of religious freedom has been purchased for us.

Chapter XII

1660. Epistles—William Dewsbury little known in his domestic character—He is apprehended at an inn in Warwick for giving thanks after supper, and imprisoned, but shortly after liberated—Arrives in London, and is imprisoned in Newgate.

It is thought, that as the four following epistles illustrate in a beautiful manner, the care William Dewsbury exercised over the flock, no apology will be required for introducing them here. They show, how he endeavored to build them up in our most holy faith, the faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is according to godliness; what the groundwork was, which he sought to lay for those works of righteousness which alone are acceptable to the Lord; turning the minds of his readers, at the same time, to the unfailing source of all saving help, deliverance and consolation in the hour of inward conflict and temptation. They are laid before the reader, under the conviction, that they will be calculated to comfort, help, and edify many within the borders of our own Society. It is also possible, they may prove strengthening to many a wayfaring man, who in all respects may not walk with us; but who nevertheless, may be suffering the day of Jacob’s trouble—may be the means of encouraging him to persevere in that wrestling, which in the end shall purchase for him a new name, even that of Israel.

The first in order, which bears chiefly on the subject of exercising spiritual gifts in the church, is dated the 10th of the twelfth month, 1660.

Dear Friends and brethren, called and chosen of God, to wait upon him in his light:

Every one in particular, feel the power and life of God, exercising you in his service whatever he calls you unto. When the Lord fills the heart of any one of you with his presence, and his life moves in you, quench not the spirit; I am commanded to lay it upon you, whosoever you are, from the least to the highest growth.

Dear Friends, wait to be kept in the bond of the spirit, obedient to its motions:—to cease and stay when it

moves not, as well as to begin any exercise when it moves. Dear and tender babes, as well as you strong men, retain the pure¹ in every particular, and let not anything straiten you when God moves. And, you faithful babe, though you stammer forth a few words in the dread of the Lord, they are accepted. And you that are strong, serve the weak in strengthening them; and wait in wisdom, to give place to the motion of the spirit in them, that it may have time to bring forth what God has given. Dear brethren, feed the lambs; and loose the tongue of the dumb, that praises may arise in and among you all, to the glory of God; that in him you may be a well-spring of life one to another, in the love of God, in which the Lord God keep you all.

—W. D.

Dear faithful Friends in God,

Who have known the day when nothing has been dear to you, not life itself, that you might enjoy the light of the countenance of God, which he has now manifested in the everlasting covenant in Christ; and which now constrains to stand over, and above all flattering tongues, and all threatenings and wrath of men. This will be more and more manifest, before this day of trial be over; and what wrath soever the Lord allows to arise in the powers of the earth, without he moves, do not any seek to stop it. Let God have the glory; the wrath of man turns to his praise, and the remainder he will restrain, while the babes in meekness and patience stand still, and give glory to God in faithful obedience, with life to death, if the Lord call for it. He has blessed the labor of all whom he called into the vineyard, for whom my heart is enlarged, in the strength of the life I have received of the Father.

Oh! feel me, for I am with you, filled with joy in the Lord, that his birth is brought forth and the captive set free, the tongue of the dumb loosed and the living power of God raised, to offer up living praises on the holy altar of God, in the assemblies of his saints.

Oh! lift up your heads, be glad in the strength of the Lord, in this his day of gathering the good ripe fruit in the vineyard of the Lord. Now do the vines abound with virtue, laden with clusters of the purest grapes full ripe, which drop abundantly with wine, renewed in the kingdom of the Father. Fill your cups, be not straitened in your spirits to receive of the fulness of God. In whom I am constrained to say unto you in the light,—drink, drink abundantly; let the thirst of the soul reach forth earnestly, to draw more and more of the divine life, that it may comprehend you in its power. That in its strength your hearts may be set free over all below, and your spirit in the light of life, raised in the heavenly harmony, to praise and glorify the name of the Lord, to the astonishment of all that know not God. Whatever he gives, this keeps all that abide in it low in his fear, so that neither heights nor depths, tribulation nor distress, persecution nor famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, life nor death, things present nor things to come, can ever separate them from faithful obedience to Christ Jesus, the Light.

¹ “The wisdom which is from above is first pure.” The meaning of the writer doubtless is, “preserve a pure conscience by obedience to that in the soul which leads into purity of life, which is not of man, but from above; for disobedience causes straitness:” this is what the writer cautions the church against.

And, dwell over all created enjoyments, in the unlimited power, to guide you, whether in bonds or out of bonds, so that your words be few and savory at all times, and minister grace to the hearers. And be tenderly affectioned one to another in the love of God; and in unity in him who is blessed forever! Farewell.

Your brother,

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

From the Tower in York, 25th of First month, 1661

The third epistle above referred to, is thus superscribed:—"Let this go abroad among all the afflicted and wounded in spirit:"

Dear child, which cries over all the world, and beyond all the pleasure, pomp, and vanity therein, for the enjoyment of the light and countenance of God;—fear not, neither be discouraged, because of the violent assaults of the enemy, who seeks to draw you into carnal reasonings, and thus to kindle a fire to yourself, and causes you to walk in the light of the sparks which you have kindled;—and this you have at the hand of the Lord, in going from his counsel you lie down in sorrow. Few know your great distress; but, to the Lord it is known, and to those who have walked in the same path.

Oh, you afflicted soul, who live in the deep sense of the working of the evil one in your mind, and many times are ready to say,—Never was any like unto me, nor any sorrow like unto my sorrow;—in this languishing, despairing, mourning of your soul, all things are made bitter to you as the waters of Marah. Thus are you driven from all comfort, as a child without a father, a desolate widow without a husband, and as a stranger whom no eye pities, in your apprehension: sometimes saying in your heart, in the heat of the temptation, and of the fire you have kindled, "Oh, that I had been any creature but what I am! or, if it were the will of the Lord, that he might shorten my days, that I might not be any longer on earth to sin against him! For in your own sense and feeling, walking in the sparks you have kindled, in carnal reasonings, you discern nothing but wrath; on every side, horror, misery, and distress; secretly crying out in your heart,—Oh, that I were alone in the wilderness, or in a cave, or den of the earth, that I might never see nor hear the sons of men any more, but in secret retiredness, mourn out my days until I die."

Oh, hearken no longer to the enemy, who says, there has none traveled where you are traveling, neither drunk of the cup that you are drinking. He is a liar, who goes about to destroy your precious soul. I drank the same cup, with my faithful friends who are born of the royal seed: every one in his measure has traveled in the same path, and has endured the same temptations, and walked in the light of the same sparks, and lain down in sorrow, in the sense of the same misery as you mourn under.

No longer lend an ear to the enemy, and to the thoughts of your heart. Arise, in the light of the covenant, and stay your heart; and the Lord God will throw down the enemy of your peace, destroy the carnal reasonings of your mind, and put out the fire which you have kindled. He will deliver you out of the horrible pit, and set your

feet upon the Rock of Ages. You shall tread down the enemy of your soul, in the sensible feeling of the love of the Father, who will manifest himself to be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the mournful widow, and a comfort to that which mourns in you, in the uprightness of your heart, to do the will of the living God. So, in the power of his might, stay your heart; and tread upon all doubts, fears, despairing thoughts, and reasonings. Arise over them all in the light of Christ. He will lead you into the banqueting-house of our God, where you shall sit down with all the redeemed of my Father, who are born of the immortal seed, and have passed through great tribulations, and have washed our garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This shall be your portion if you diligently hearken to the counsel of the Lord, who calls you to trust in him. He will embrace you in the arm of his love, and you shall praise his name forever!

God Almighty, in his light and life, raise up your soul, and establish your heart in his counsel, steadfastly to wait for his power to lead you, in the cross, out of all unbelief, and cause you to lie down at rest in obedience to his will: where you shall drink the cup of the salvation of God.

Farewell!

—W. D.

York Castle, the 23rd of Third month, 1661

It would be gratifying to our natural feelings, to be able to contemplate the character of such a man as William Dewsbury, under other circumstances beside those in which we have hitherto found him. We have been incidentally informed, that his home was at Wakefield, that he was a married man, and was blessed with a family of children. On each of those occasions, when he is permitted to escape from the hands of his persecutors, and to enjoy his liberty again, the mind is involuntarily carried to the scenes of domestic life, prepared to participate in that enjoyment which all parties must feel on so happy an event. It would be interesting to us further, to contemplate this zealous servant and minister of Christ, like Paul the tentmaker, employed in the pursuit of his trade, and to be able to state his success, and how far the Lord had blessed him in these his outward affairs, agreeably to the gracious promise made to him on his setting out in life. But, though there is no reason to doubt the Lord's faithfulness, such was the devotedness of his servant to the cause of Truth, and the testimony of Jesus, that little or no mention is made by him of these things; so that we are at a loss to know, how a man so totally deprived as he was, of the opportunity of enriching himself by his own exertions in business, was preserved from having his wife and family reduced to poverty and distress. We are not even informed, that on his liberation from confinement at York, he visited his home, however probable it is that such was the case. So fully engrossed were the minds of Friends in that day, in the pursuit of the one great object before them, that worldly affairs appear to have had but very little place. They felt and saw that the time was short, and that the fashion of this would pass away, so they were without carefulness; they that "had wives were as though they had none, they that wept as though they wept not, they that rejoiced as though they rejoiced not, they that bought, as though they possessed not:—they used this world, as not abusing it."

[A document has come to hand, since the above lines were penned, which affords in a few words a striking illustration of the above remarks as regards William Dewsbury. Under date of the 10th of fourth month, of this year, he makes a request to his correspondent, Margaret Fell, “a mother in Israel,” to write to “my tender children and family.” He adds, “In the life of my God, I have given them up, with my own life when he will call for it, a free sacrifice: in his will it is offered up, for him to do what is good in his eyes.”—*Editor.*]

The following beautiful sentence, which closes one of his epistles about this period, may also be added:—

Watch over one another with a single eye, building up one another in the holy faith, opening your hearts in the free Spirit of God to them that are in need, that you may bear the image of your heavenly Father, who relieves the hungry, and eases the burden, and makes glad by refreshing his, in the time of need; giving liberally and upbraiding not. Even so be it with you, in the name of the Lord, says your brother and companion in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Farewell!

In such instances of devotedness as that of William Dewsbury and many of the early Friends, and others the servants of Christ, we are strongly reminded of the words of our Lord to his disciples, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” And there is no reason to doubt, that divine support is often, in gracious condescension, administered under such circumstances, so as to render the creature for the time indifferent to the body and its various necessities.

It was about the beginning of the fourth month, 1661, that William Dewsbury was liberated from York Castle, as has been stated, by proclamation of Charles the II. In the sixth month we meet with him in Bedfordshire, at Buckrin’s Park, the residence of James Nagill, who with Justice Crutt had been already convinced of the truth by his powerful ministry. Between this visit and his being in London, where he was confined four months in Newgate, we find him suffering among other Friends at Warwick, for giving thanks after supper at an inn, which was called preaching at a conventicle. The act of preaching under certain circumstances, had been recently made illegal by the government. On the present occasion, the Friends were taken before a magistrate at an inn, who tendered them the oaths, and because for conscience sake they refused to swear, they were sent to prison under sentence of premunire; where, shameful to relate, some of them were detained for as long a period as ten years, and were never brought to any further trial. Such was the exercise of arbitrary power, under which Friends grievously, yet patiently suffered. It appears from Besse’s relation of the circumstance, to have been about the eighth month of the year, when this occurrence took place; and as, in the same month, Dewsbury dates an epistle from Newgate prison, London, it is evident that he obtained his liberty at Warwick, and proceeded pretty directly on his journey to that city.

Chapter XIII

1661. Act against conventicles, under which Friends suffered banishment—Epistles of encouragement—William Dewsbury is imprisoned in York Castle—General Epistle to the Church.

How, and under what particular circumstances, this meek and constant sufferer came to be cast into Newgate, I have not been able to discover. But it was in this year, that the cruel and intolerant act against conventicles, which was framed as an instrument of persecution against Friends, first came into force. By this act it was decreed, that “if any person should refuse to take an oath when by law required, or should maintain the taking of any oath to be unlawful, or if the persons called Quakers should meet for religious exercise after the 24th of March, 1661, being thereof convicted, they should forfeit for the first offense, five pounds, for the second, ten pounds, to be levied by distress; and, for lack of possessions to allow of such distress, to be imprisoned, for the first offense three months, for the second six months; and upon conviction for the third offense, he or she should abjure the realm, or otherwise the king and council might cause him or them to be transported to any of the king’s plantations beyond the seas.” These were the acts, by which the blessed truth was attempted to be crushed in those days; and under the mayoralty of one Richard Brown, the leading features of whose character were pride, intolerance and cruelty, in which he appears to have delighted; for, says Sewel, “he would commit cruelty with a smiling countenance,” the government had a fit executor in London of this new and barbarous law; some of the consequences of which will be seen hereafter. I apprehend, however, that it was under a first offense of meeting for religious worship contrary to this act, that Dewsbury with a multitude of others was cast into Newgate.

Among the epistles which he wrote while confined there, for the edification and encouragement of the church and of individuals under various circumstances, is the following; addressed to his dear suffering brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ Jesus.

In him watch and pray, and believe in his name, that you may keep the word of his patience, and in the will of God, quietly lie down in your present sufferings for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ. He numbers the days of your sufferings; and when they are accomplished, will plead the cause of his people, in the day in which he will be revealed in flames of fire, rendering vengeance upon all that know him not, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall your innocency with all the elect be cleared, in the sight of all people, and you shall shine as the morning stars in the power of God, to enlighten the nations, through the brightness of the glory of God that shall rest upon you, to the gathering of the brethren from far, and the sisters from the ends of the earth; who shall bless the name of the Lord for you that endure in faithfulness unto the end,—the crown of glory shall rest upon you forever.

God, in his everlasting power, keep you in the life of his Son, in unity, to finish your testimony to his glory.

Farewell!

—W. D.

Given forth in Newgate prison, London, the 13th day of the Twelfth month, 1661

P. S. Dear lambs, keep in the unity, in the life and power of God; and let your words be few.

We have also from his pen, during this imprisonment, the following animated address to his suffering Friends.

Dear Friends,

All in their measure abide in God, so as to keep your dominion in his heavenly authority during these trying days, wherein husband is called to forsake wife, and wife husband, parents children, and children parents, and other created enjoyments, for the testimony of the Lord. And all you, who are or shall be called to bear your testimony, prize the mercy of the Lord, who has made you his chosen jewels and the first fruits among many brethren, to fill up the measure of the sufferings that are yet behind. In the name and power of the Lord Jesus arise, whether husband, wife, parents, or children, in bonds or out of bonds, and take to you the sharp threshing instrument, which is the power of God, that you may thresh all the mountains of thoughts, fears, or unbelief, and every desire and imagination that would draw from a peaceable rest in God.

In the name of the Lord, I lay it upon you, be valiant for your freedom; and with the powerful instrument of God, thresh and bruise down the mountains as chaff and dust. And thresh the head of the old serpent, the devil, spare him not, and be not afraid of encountering: for mighty is the Lord, that has called you to conquer him. So keep his head under; bruise and keep under all that would disquiet you, or draw you from your rest. That so, in peace in Christ you may all abide, in a pure resignation to the will of the Father. So will your joy flow as a river, and your dominion be in the authority of God, over all the mountains of this world, to reign in the holy life with Christ. In the lowly mind and holy fear, sound out the new song with triumph, over the devil and his angels and the accuser of the brethren; whom you will see cast down; and you shall tread upon him; and bruise him, and all that would join with him, with the sharp threshing instrument, the mighty power of God, which you have received in Christ the Light.

And in all things you do one for another, let love abound in the innocent life, doing as you would be done unto in the sight of God. And you that are servants in families, who are in sufferings, I lay it upon you, be faithful, that the good savor of God be found among you, to the praise of the Lord. And you that are out of bonds, in what you may, as the wisdom of God leads, be assistant every way, bearing one another's burdens, to fulfill the law of Christ, who is taking to him his great power to reign forever.

The strength even of the mighty God be with you, and lift up all your heads. Stand in his authority and keep the word of his patience, to finish your testimony to the praise and glory of his name, over all, blessed forever.

Of his dominion there is no end; in which you, dear lambs, may feel and read me in the life which is hid from the world, but known to you in the secret of God, where our joy and triumph are. Whatever becomes of the outward man, in the will of God, farewell!—yes, farewell, in the name of the Lord!

—W. D.

Given forth in Newgate prison, the 3rd day of the First month, 1661-2

With a few exceptions as regards some insulated facts, all that is known of the last twenty-five years of the life of William Dewsbury might be comprised in a small compass; and this will necessarily be the case with considerable portions of it. He was delivered from Newgate prison, in London, early in the year 1662, and proceeded homewards, where it is probable he continued a few months. We are informed by Besse, that persecution pursued him there also. He says, that on the 29th of the fifth month of that year, he was taken from his own house at Durteen, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and committed to York Castle, his old residence, as a ringleader and preacher among the Quakers.

[A letter under his hand, dated York Castle, the 3rd of the eighth month, states, that there are upwards of one hundred Friends his fellow-prisoners, that they meet daily for the purpose of waiting upon and worshipping Almighty God, and that his presence covers their assemblies, to their great comfort and the astonishment of their enemies.—*Editor.*]

Here he was not idle, but still continued to visit the church by his epistles. Among those which he wrote during this confinement at York, the following is one which I should not feel myself excused in withholding from the reader. It is addressed “in the flowings of the tender compassion of the Lord Jesus, to all the mourners in Zion; and the afflicted, desolate people, who wait for his coming, as for the morning, and have no satisfaction in anything but in the enjoyment of his sweet and comfortable presence.”

Oh, Jerusalem! who are become the beautiful bride, how did he seek you in the day of your divorcement, when you were weeping in the wilderness, as a desolate widow, who had not any to comfort her; then your mournings and breakings of heart were your greatest comfort! and the more your tears were shed for lack of him, the greater was your satisfaction. Oh! the weary days you had upon the earth, because your languishing soul knew not where to meet with your Beloved, neither did you know how to walk in the steps of the flock of your companions; who were comforted with His presence whom your soul lacked. Then, though you knew it not, he was near to you, enlivening the desires that were towards his name. And in the accepted time he sent forth whom he had ordained, to declare unto you the glory of his love, in the light of his own life, in which he has covered you as with a wedding garment, and in it you appear comely in his sight, and acceptable in his presence.

And for your sake. Oh Jerusalem! you city of the living God, what has been endured? How many innocent lambs have suffered for bringing glad tidings to you of Him whom your soul thirsted after, is hard to be expressed. How, in God’s authority, have the striplings run to and fro on the earth, willing to spend and be

spent in all services of love, to persuade you to forsake all that has entangled your mind, and hindered you from enjoying the innocent life of your Beloved. Your mighty men, with many of the sons and daughters of glory, have sealed their living testimony with their blood, in the patience and sufferings of the Lamb of God, that you may be affected with the excellency of the glory of Him whom your soul desires.

And now, the Lord God requires of every particular son and daughter of Zion, to watch and pray that none enter into temptation: and all that have any stain upon their garments, to come to the fountain which is opened for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in, which is the heart-breaking love of God manifested in the light of his covenant, and sealed up to the soul in the blood of Jesus.

Oh! come away, come away, out of all your thoughts, desires, doubts, and unbelief, which would turn you aside from the enjoyment of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Let none stand afar off because of your littleness, lameness, blindness, weakness, or infirmities, who cannot live at peace until you be healed by the blood of the Lamb.

Arise, arise, you necessitated people, in the light of the Lord. Give up to the drawing spirit of life in the light of Jesus Christ. He will carry you, who cannot go, in the arms of his compassions; he will cause the lame to walk; and you, who are sensible of your blindness, to recover your sight; yes, he will heal you of all your infirmities, who wait in the light, to be ordered and guided as a little child by the washing and sanctifying Spirit of the Lord Jesus; who is become a husband to the desolate widow, a repairer of the breaches, and a restorer of the desolate places; in whom the fatherless have found mercy this day, for his name's sake.

Oh! what shall I say of the unspeakable love of God in Christ Jesus, the Husband of the Bride. Oh! you sons of the glorious day, read, and feel the unsearchable love, and you handmaids, drink of the inexhaustible ocean, which flows over all opposition. This is the Son of the Father's love, who has been "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "He was wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes are we healed;" and this is the work of the Lord.—Let all crowns be thrown down before him, he alone shall have the glory, for besides him there is no other.

Therefore, let every son, daughter, and servant of God, watch and diligently hearken to his counsel: and whatever the natural man most inclines to, when the temptation besets you, judge yourselves, look up to the Lord, and resist the devil with boldness in the first assault, and the Lord God will give you dominion over them, and the bond of iniquity shall not have power over you. In his holy authority, every one stand in dominion upon the head of the first man, with all his excellency and glory; that in the perfect freedom every particular individual may reign, in the measure of the light, over every thought and desire that is contrary to the will of God; that, in his will, you may all dwell in the holy faith, which will arm against all the fiery darts of the devil. You shall break down Satan under your feet, and shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the word of your testimony; and continually drink of the rivers of pleasure, the presence of the Lord Jesus, our light, life, and righteousness forever. For he is become our Husband, and we are as the wife of his bosom, in the delight of his glorious love.

Let the mourners in Zion rejoice, and the afflicted among the people be glad, and fear the Lord. And let not any who desires salvation in uprightness of heart, say, The Lord regards me not: for whatever you hunger and thirst for in this life, you are the heir of it, and the Lord will satisfy your hunger with his refreshings for his name's sake. And this is the portion of those that are least in their own eyes among the people: the Lord has spoken it.

And all you, inhabitants of the city of the great God, whom the Lord has prospered in your living testimony, in what he has called unto,—blessed be the Lord God, for you retain the sense of your nothingness in self, and so become poor with the poorest, and weak with the weakest, and truly make ‘self of no reputation,’ but humble it to the cross, and do not serve self but God and his people, with all his gifts and ornaments, with which he has adorned you. Because of the savor which you have in Christ, the souls of the upright in heart do praise the Lord for you. Your steadfast, valiant, unwearied travails, labors, and sufferings for the Lord, cause the hearts of his people to be enlarged with hallelujahs and high praises in the assemblies of his saints. You know that your reward is with you; and woe to them that devise mischief against you, whom the Lord has blessed.

Oh, Zion's children, from the least to the greatest, love the Lord Jesus Christ. And let not a thought of the heart draw you from the light, life, and love of the Lord Jesus. Let the day of the resurrection arise upon you, which will set your souls in perfect love, above all infidelity and unbelief. Oh! drink to the full satisfaction of your souls, of the cup of his salvation, for it is freely handed to all that love him, who thirst for his mercies, and tread down the self-working spirit: so that all may be bound down in silence, that would move in any exercise to utter words rashly before the Lord.

My dear Friends, let us comfort and console our souls together; for this is our Beloved, we have waited for him, and now he is come with power and great glory, to deliver his captives, and to establish them in his glorious freedom, where the evil one shall not prevail against them; and to marry unto himself the soul that has waited for him as for the morning. And all, in this union, feel his power abounding in you, to lead into the daily cross, and to stand over all that would draw from the sweet unity, which is in the footsteps of the flock of his companions who walk in the light. Stir up the gift of God in you, in all faithful obedience. As your hearts are filled with the heavenly power of the Lord, and broken in the sense of the overcomings of his life, and moved in the strength thereof, in any exercise in your families, or in the assemblies of his people,—quench not the Spirit of the Lord, but be obedient, and keep within the bounds of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, which sacrifice is acceptable in his presence. And all feel the love of God enlarging your hearts one to another, that the strong may bear the burdens of the weak, and in pure love all may grow fruitful plants in the vineyard, which God's right hand has planted.

And as for our little sister, scattered among the people of the nations, whose broken cisterns have failed her; what shall we do for her? In this day which is come upon us, she shall be spoken for, though at present she cannot draw near, but mourns at a distance, and cries in secret for lack of the enjoyment of the God of our salvation. Oh! let your hearts breathe unto the Lord, that he may seal his counsel to her, and cause her to walk in

the light of the Lord, with us whom he has raised to be the first fruits among many brethren, to bear his glorious testimony over the heads of the children of men and above all their wrath, who withstand the appearance of God; who will cause them to bow before his glory, in the day in which he will clear the innocence of his beloved people. Neither by sword, nor spear, nor by the arm of flesh, but with the breath of his mouth, shall he smite the hearts of them that know him not, and by the brightness of his coming, who shall spread his fame over all nations, to gather brethren from afar, and sisters from the ends of the earth. Yes, the mighty shall bow to his scepter, and the nations that are saved shall walk in his light, with us, whom he has made as dear unto himself as the apple of his eye. Though a woman may forget her sucking child, yet the Lord will not forget any that fear him. But he will lead them through all tribulations, with joy in his heavenly power, until they have finished their course with gladness, to the glory of his name forever.

And this is the portion of the lot of your inheritance, against whom every tongue that is lifted up shall fall in judgment, neither shall the weapons that are formed against you prosper. For the Lord has made you to be a burdensome stone to the nations, and the praise of the whole earth: and the desires of the people shall be to the Most High God, who dwells in the midst of you; who has displayed his banner of love over you, and has turned away the fury of his wrath from you. You, who love the light, and bathe your soul in the ocean of his inexpressible mercies, shall never more lack the fresh springs of life. The Lord will keep you in safety, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against any of the sons and daughters who walk in the light of your city, O Jerusalem, in whom there is no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb is in you, and his servants do serve you, and they behold his face, and his name is written in their foreheads. There is no night there, neither need of candle, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they do reign forever,—as the Lord has spoken through your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom of patience in the Lord Jesus.

—W. D.

Given forth in York Castle, the 19th of First month, 1663

Chapter XIV

*1663. William Dewsbury released from York—Imprisoned for near eight years in Warwick jail
—Persecutions of Friends; the banishment of many—William Dewsbury's consolatory and
animating addresses to the sufferers.*

William Dewsbury was set at liberty from his confinement at York early in the following year, and the scene of his imprisonment was changed towards the close of 1663, to the common jail at Warwick; where he was a prisoner from that time until the early part of the year 1671, a period of nearly eight years. Thus were “bonds and afflictions” meted out to this patient and cheerful sufferer for “the Truth as it is in

Jesus.” As an introduction to some epistles of sympathy and encouragement which he addressed. during this imprisonment, to Friends under sentence of banishment, it will be necessary now to give the reader some information relative to the operation of that cruel and intolerant act of the government already mentioned, which was evidently intended to crush the Society and to root out their principles from the land.—The persecution of Friends under the conventicle act was carried to such an extreme, that the prisons, in London especially, were continually crowded with them, and some hundreds were sentenced to banishment under the stroke of that arbitrary instrument.

William Crouch, a Friend, who lived through that terrible period, for it was so on more accounts than the one in question, writing of the year 1664-5, gives us the following information.

Now the enemies and adversaries of the church, were in deep counsels and consultations, utterly to root the Quakers out of England, by banishing them into foreign plantations: and a law being made, many of the magistrates and rulers were very intent on executing it; and many Friends were taken up at our religious meetings and imprisoned, and at their courts of assize and session were sentenced to banishment, and put on shipboard to be sent away. Some were actually carried to the plantations abroad; others who were put on ship-board, were afterwards set on shore in England by the masters of the vessels.” “But it was not long before the Lord was pleased to manifest his displeasure, and to put a stop to these unnatural, unrighteous, and inhuman actions, by those severe strokes of his hand upon the nation, in the years 1665 and 1666.”¹

It appears from the same author, that the first proceedings under this act took place at the court sessions at Hertford, the 12th and 13th days of the month called August, 1664, where Orlando Bridgman presided as judge. He passed sentence of banishment against eight Friends, who were then brought to trial. Seven of these, namely, Nicholas Lucas, Henry Feast, Henry Marshall, Francis Pryor, John Blindell, Jeremiah Hearn, and Samuel Trahern, were brought up to London, and on the 14th of the month called September, put on board the *Ann*, a packet for Jamaica, Thomas May commander. But two months afterwards they were set on shore, for the following among other reasons, given under the commander’s own hand, and duly witnessed. “I, seeing Providence has much crossed me hitherto, whereby I perceive that the hand of the Lord is against me, that I dare not proceed on my voyage to carry them, they being innocent persons, and no crime signified against them, worthy of banishment,” etc.—“for these reasons and many more, I will not carry them.” This was certified and given to the sufferers, to show that they had not made their escape from the ship.

After this, three other Friends, namely, Cannawell Briton, Bartholomew Croker, and Lewis Rogers, were put on board the ship *Mary Fortune*, bound for Barbados, John Lloyd, master: who also repented, and on that account refusing to carry them, set them on shore, giving them a certificate containing the following

¹ The plague which broke out in London, and the great fire which followed in the next year—signal tokens of the divine displeasure with the wickedness of that city.

among other reasons for his doing so. After alluding to some causes of detention, he says, “But now, going to depart, their cry, and the cry of their families and friends, are entered into the ears of the Lord God, and he has smitten us even unto the very heart, saying, ‘Cursed is he that parts man and wife:’ and moreover, ‘They that oppress his people, his plagues shall follow them, wheresoever they go.’ And assuredly, we do in part partake of them already; for our consciences will in no wise let us rest, or be in quiet, for the Lord has smitten us with a terrible fear, so that we can in no wise proceed to carry them,” etc.

From Besse’s account of the sufferings of Friends we learn, that many hundreds of them, were sentenced to drink of the same cup, but masters of ships, conscious of the innocence of the sufferers, generally refused to have any share in “the gain of oppression.” But three Friends, namely, Edward Brush, James Harding, and Robert Hays, were, on the 24th of the first month, 1664, taken from Newgate and carried down to Gravesend, and there put on board ship with little or no warning; and Hays being ill at the time, soon died, and his corpse was brought back to London and there buried. The other two Friends were carried to Jamaica, where, under the divine blessing, they were prosperous; and after having remained a short time in the island, they returned to England, Edward Brush to his wife and family, and James Harding with a wife he had married there, and three children, with which she had presented him at a birth.

The last instance of banishment which it is my intention to lay before the reader, may be related as follows. In the year 1664, fifty-five Friends were sentenced to exile, by judgment passed at Hicks’s Hall, by Judges Hyde and Twisden. Thirty-seven men and eighteen women, They were imprisoned in Newgate until the 4th of the sixth month, 1665, and at this time, while the plague was raging in London, they were taken from prison; and the government agents, after much search and many refusals, having engaged with a man of infamous character to carry them to Jamaica—the prisoners were put on board, some of them being ill of the plague at that time. The ship, called the *Black Eagle*, the master’s name Fudge, was seven weeks before it got to the Downs, within which time twenty-seven Friends, died, many of whom were buried in the marshes below Gravesend. Fudge, who had run himself largely into debt in fitting out his ship, was arrested and cast into prison, and Peter Love was made master in his room.

In the Downs, they were detained many weeks by contrary winds, as also between that and Plymouth. After considerable detention, clearing away from that harbor, the *Black Eagle* was captured by a Dutch privateer; they then encountered a storm, which separated the vessels, and carried one of them to the coast of Norway, but at length it succeeded in arriving at Holland, where all the Friends met. The Dutch, finding that their prisoners were not likely to be exchanged for prisoners of war, granted certificates to such of them and sent them home. Thus, in this instance, the mercy of an overruling Providence interposed, to frustrate and to blast the design of these arbitrary and cruel proceedings.²

² George Fox has left us the following more circumstantial account of the same extraordinary instance of persecution.—“There were great imprisonments in this (1666) and the former years, while I was prisoner at Lancaster and Scarborough. At London, many Friends were crowded into Newgate and other prisons, where the pestilence was, and many Friends died in prison. Many also were banished, and several sent on ship-board by the king’s order. Some

The two epistles immediately following, are those referred to in a preceding paragraph.

For my dear, honorable brethren, who are or may be sentenced to be transported to the isles beyond the sea, for the testimony of the name of the Lord Jesus.

My dear Friends, in the suffering of the Lamb, who lives and reigns forever and ever, and shall overcome all his enemies in the day determined, when all his enemies shall bow under the soles of his feet,—then shall all that oppress you, call you the blessed of the Lord. O my dear brethren! lift up your heads in the light and life of Jesus, for whom you suffer; abide in his light: reign over your thoughts, either of wife or children, or whatever would trouble your minds, for giving up freely in this your testimony. The Lord is with you, and thousands shall bless the name of the Lord for your faithful testimony, which shall sound over nations, to gather the people.

O, my dear brethren, triumph in the face of all your enemies! it shall be well with you, wheresoever the Lord allows you to be carried; and as to your wives and children, the Lord has said, it shall be well with them; the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon them and with you, to the comfort of the isles that wait for his law. Therefore, in the peaceable power of the Lord, go on, you chosen brethren of the suffering seed, which the Lord has blessed. Blessed be the day, that the Lord called you by his power, to stand faithful in what he requires of you; in which living testimony, your memorial shall never perish, but preach to ages and generations, to the glory of the name of our God! Go on with gladness, for it is to bring in the seed from the ends of the earth, that our brethren may come from far, and our sisters from the ends of the world.

O, mighty God! cover your faithful servants with your glorious power, and cause them and their families to rejoice, in your disposing of them! Amen.

My life in the suffering spirit go with you, in the name of the Lord! My dear companions in bonds salute you in the love of the Lord. Farewell!

—W. D.

masters of ships would not carry them, but set them on shore again: yet some were sent to Barbados, Jamaica, and Nevis; and the Lord blessed them there. There was one master of a ship, who was very wicked and cruel to Friends that were put on board of his ship: for he kept Friends down under decks, though the sickness was among them, so that many died of it. But the Lord plagued him for his wickedness. For he lost most of his seamen by the plague, and lay several months crossed by contrary winds; though other ships went out and made their voyages. At last he came before Plymouth; and then the governor and magistrates would not allow him or any of his men to come ashore, though he lacked necessities for his voyage. But Thomas Lower, Arthur Cotton, John Light and some other Friends went to the ship's side, and carried necessities for Friends who were prisoners on board. The master being thus crossed and plagued, cursed those who had put upon him this freight, and said he hoped he should not go far before he was taken. And the vessel was but a little while gone out of sight of Plymouth, when she was taken by a Dutch man-of-war, and carried into Holland. When they came into Holland, the States there sent the banished Friends back to England with a letter of passport and a certificate to show that they had not made an escape, but were sent back by them. But, in time, the Lord's power wrought over this storm, and many of our persecutors were confounded and put to shame."—Journal, fol. edit. 1786. p. 384.

Warwick common jail, 10th of the Eighth month, 1664

For those, from whom the Lord has allowed or shall allow their dear and tender husbands to be separated beyond the seas or elsewhere, for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear handmaids, whom the Lord has, counted worthy to part with your dear, and tender husbands, for his name—assuredly, many put their shoulders to help to bear the burden of your trials this day. O, the tears and breakings of heart, that are poured forth before the Lord for your dear husbands, and you and your tender children! You are families of many prayers, and assuredly shall be known to be families of many mercies. Be content with your cup, handed forth to you; and bless the name of the Lord, that you are accounted worthy to be the first fruits. What could the Lord do more for you, than count you worthy to suffer in this nature, and give you such husbands, who are set as lights in the face of all people; let it be seen that you love the Lord Jesus more than your dear husbands. Stand over the affectionate part, and solace your souls in the love and life of the Lord Jesus, your eternal husband and the comforter of your earthly husbands. He will make us all rejoice in whatever he calls us unto, we diligently watching and judging ourselves, and resting in the light and in the will of God. In which, the Lord establish you, for whom the soul of your brother breathes daily to the Lord, to strengthen you and your dear husbands and all that love the Lord Jesus Christ; in whom, fare you well!

—W. D.

Warwick common jail, 10th of Eighth month, 1664

The following epistle belongs to this period; and it is subjoined for the information and satisfaction of those, who have faith to receive it as an evidence, in addition to those which have preceded, that the flock of Christ is not left alone and comfortless in the day of trouble, affliction, and distress.

To all faithful and suffering members in all holes, prisons, and jails, for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ; with the rest of the faithful, wherever scattered.

Dear brethren and sisters!

Hear the word of the Lord:—thus says the Lord, though you now drink the cup of adversity, and eat the bread of affliction, and are trampled upon as though you were not worthy to live upon the earth, yet, notwithstanding all the fury of men, you are resolved in the strength of his spirit, forever to be deprived of the sweet enjoyments of wife, husband, tender children, parents, and outward possessions, liberty and life, [rather than] deny the testimony of his name before the sons of men.

Oh! you dear and tender children, who love not your lives unto death this day, that you may finish a good testimony for the glory of the Lord God; lift up your heads in the light of his covenant, and believe in his name, for he is near you, even the mighty God of safety. And let not any weight or burden lie upon you; for He will be more than a husband to wife, and more than wife to husband, or parents to children, or children to parents; yes, He will be a husband to the widow, and a father to the children who are deprived of their tender parents for his name's sake. He will enlarge your borders in the life of righteousness. You that suffer in true innocency, will he refresh with the depth of his mercies. Yes, he will guard you with the angel of his presence, and all that devise mischief against you, shall be confounded before the glory of his power, with which he will keep and preserve you in the word of his patience, in safety, in his presence.

Therefore, dear children, who drink the deepest in sufferings, think it not hard; for it is his purpose unto you all, that have not any eye to self, but alone seek his glory in all that you do, to make you more and more honorable, and double his blessings upon you and yours. For he has beheld your integrity, and is mightily moved in compassion towards you. Therefore he is risen for your sake, to declare unto you, that not a hair of your head shall perish, neither shall you be detained in prisons and desolate holes any longer than he has determined shall be for your good, and the glory of his name. Therefore stand faithful; resist every evil thought, or whatever would cause you to murmur, or desire anything but what you know will advance the glory of his name, and the exaltation of his truth, over all that rises up against it; in your being truly subject to the measure of light and life, that will not let any seek preeminence or esteem among men. Neither let self-striving nor self-serving have power in any; but in true humility, love and meekness, watch one over another; and let the strong take the weak by the hand, that you may all gently, in love, meekness, and holy fear, serve one another and dread his name; that your love may be manifest one unto another, in the simplicity of your spirits. Then will he make his dwelling among you, and with you; and his glorious presence you shall feel mightily in you and among you, moving in the exercise of his spirit, to the renown of his name, and the comfort one of another. And he will crown you with heavenly blessings; and you shall praise his name forever, that he made you his jewels, and counted you worthy to suffer for the testimony of his name. He will go before you, through all the waters and floods of afflictions; and will appear with you before the councils of men; and his saving power shall compass you about in your hot and sharp afflictions, all you who have your confidence alone in the Lord your God.

Therefore trust in his name, and cast all your care upon him. And if any of you joyfully suffer the spoiling of your goods, he will supply what is needful for you and yours. And if any of you seal your testimony in the word of his patience with your blood, he will take care of your tender wives and children, or parents, for whom your souls have been poured forth in prayers for their good.

Therefore hear the word which is sounded unto you. Rejoice not too much in spirits being made subject, but throw down your crowns before him, that there be not a self-seeking, self-serving spirit in the family of his people. But feel the birth immortal raised up in the resurrection of life in you all, which truly makes self of no reputation; so that all loftiness be laid low, and all haughtiness bowed down in every one. Thus the Lord God, may be loved, obeyed, and exalted in you all: who is taking to him his great power, to exalt the meek upon

the earth, and to reign over all the pride of the children of men, who are exalted above the witness in their consciences; so that his sons may be brought from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, in the sight of all people; whom he will make to confess, in subjection to his power, that you are the people of God, and of the righteous seed which the Lord has blessed. Not any weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, but come to naught, which will be hastened and certainly performed, according to what is here declared, to your comfort and joy. And you shall assuredly know, that the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

The word of the Lord, before expressed, came to me in the prison-house at Warwick, the 13th day of the first month, 1664; which constrained me to send it to be read among you, dear, faithful, and suffering people of God, in whom I remain your brother and companion in tribulation and kingdom of patience in the Lord Jesus Christ.

—W. D.

Chapter XV

*Grounds on which Friends were willing to endure such sufferings—Statement of their principles
—Additional testimony from Penington.*

In the last chapter we have seen, how the malice of the grand adversary of mankind was exercised towards those, who in that day, by the powerful efforts they were making, threatened to shake his kingdom to its very foundation. Friends had taken their station in the front of the battle, in which the nation was then engaged for the security of its rights and liberties. They, however, fought not as others did. They wrestled not with flesh and blood, neither were the weapons they wielded carnal. With spiritual weapons they contended against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. No instrument could have been easily constructed, to put the constancy of this faithful band more fully to the test, than the act against conventicles; which, to the infliction of fine and imprisonment, now added confiscation and banishment; with the determination, if it had been possible, to bend their steadfast wills under the despotism of the prevailing power, and make them bow to the image of the day. Friends saw that the stake was great, and that the trust confided to them was no less so. The cause was the Lord's, not their own; and their success, through his faithfulness who stood by and protected them, was beyond anything that mere human energy could have accomplished.

But such of my readers, as look upon the views of Friends to have been merely sectarian, may still be disposed to inquire what the object was, the attainment of which the Quakers proposed to themselves, that could possibly afford them an equivalent, either present or future, in return for the dreadful

sufferings they thus patiently and perseveringly endured. I answer, they suffered for the testimony of a good conscience, and many of them were Christian martyrs, in the comprehensive sense of the word. Their cause was identified with the broad principles and catholic spirit of Christianity itself, and was by no means sectarian. But to satisfy an inquiry of this kind, it will be necessary to speak more in detail, and to define with some precision, though briefly, those points in the religious opinions and practices of that period, in which their consciences were so deeply involved.

They laid it down as a principle of paramount importance, that no earthly power ought to be allowed to interfere in matters of conscience. With this fundamental principle once established in their minds, they hesitated not to show by an open, decided, and intrepid line of conduct, that they were sincere in asserting to be truth, whatever was thus solemnly and clearly impressed upon their minds as such, however greatly it might be opposed to prevailing notions, or at variance with human laws and long established custom; provided always, that it did not contradict any of those doctrines or principles which are revealed to us in the holy Scriptures; to which writings they at all times appealed, for a confirmation of the ground on which they acted.

Unjust laws, together with anti-christian practices, and even those in private or common life that were vain or sinful, were things against which they kept up a continual warfare; refusing compliance with the former, and zealously reproofing the latter, on all occasions, and without respect of persons, as they were led by the Spirit of Truth: patiently enduring whatever sufferings they might be obnoxious to, from thus exercising themselves to have a conscience void of offense towards God and towards man. For the greater part of forty years they persevered, through grievous persecutions, in their resistance to man's usurpation of a prerogative over conscience, to which he has no real claim; until they saw their desires in some measure answered, by a considerable alteration in the laws, as well as a manifest amelioration in public feeling.

With regard to their religious opinions, they may be briefly stated as follows: they asserted it to be a doctrine clearly deducible from Scripture itself, that unless the truths of the Gospel are by revelation of the divine spirit sealed to the mind of man, he must remain without a true perception of their import, and so fail to obtain that saving knowledge of the truth, which those writings are intended to impart.

While they asserted this as regards the holy Scriptures, they were strenuous in affirming it as their belief, upon a foundation no less solid, that the love of God to man is such and so universal, that he has provided for the salvation of all his creatures, if they on their part do not willfully reject the offers of his love in Christ Jesus. That Christ, being the "true light that enlightens every one that comes into the world," and by whom all things that are reprobable are made manifest,—believing in the light, is virtually believing in Christ, and following the light which teaches temperance, righteousness, and godliness, is following Christ, although he may never have been heard of by the outward ear.¹

That, as it is this divine light which reproofs the heart of all individuals for sin, so it would work out

the salvation of all, if not resisted: nor is it less universal than the seed of sin; being the purchase of his blood, who “tasted death for every man.” Thus, all among the heathen who are saved, are accepted for Christ’s sake, in their obedience to that measure of light and grace, however small, which they have severally received.

Consistently with the foregoing statement, respecting “the true light, that enlightens every man that comes into the world,” they believed it to be one with Him, who, in the Revelation of the apostle John, is called “the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God;” and therefore, that all who desire to experience a being created anew in Christ Jesus, must be found walking in the light, as he is in the light, in which alone is to be enjoyed that holy fellowship, which is with the saints in light, and that cleansing from all sin which is by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus, without defining the order in which the great work is accomplished, regeneration, including sanctification and justification, is truly experienced.

On these general principles were based some of those particular views which made Friends so offensive in their early days. By these were regulated their opinions, or rather their conclusions, on the subject of Gospel ministry; which excluded pay for preaching, and human appointments or acquirements, as necessary for this important work. They were strenuous in their belief, that true Gospel ministry was a thing very different from that which passed for it in the world. From Him who instructed them they learned, agreeably with the testimony of the holy Scriptures, that Gospel ministry, can only be exercised

1 By this it is not intended to exclude or undervalue the belief in the outward coming, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, mediation or atonement of the Lord Jesus, a sincere faith in these precious truths, and in all that is recorded concerning him in the holy Scriptures, being obligatory on all those who have the blessing of these invaluable records. On this subject R. Barclay, in the fifteenth section of his fifth and sixth Propositions, says,

“We do not hereby intend any ways to lessen or derogate from the atonement and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; but on the contrary, do magnify and exalt it. For as we believe all those things to have been certainly transacted, which are recorded in the holy Scriptures concerning the birth, life, miracles, sufferings, resurrection and ascension of Christ; so we do also believe that it is the duty of every one to believe it to whom it pleases God to reveal the same, and to bring to them the knowledge of it; yes we believe it were damnable unbelief not to believe it, when so declared; but to resist that holy Seed, which, as minded, would lead and incline every one to believe it as it is offered unto them, though it reveals not in every one the outward and explicit knowledge of it, nevertheless it always assents to it *ubi declaratur*, where it is declared. Nevertheless, as we firmly believe it was necessary that Christ should come, that by his death and sufferings he might offer up himself a sacrifice to God for our sins, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; so we believe that the remission of sins which any partake of, is only in and by virtue of that most satisfactory sacrifice, and no otherwise. For it is by the obedience of that one that the free gift is come upon all to justification. For we affirm, that as all men partake of the fruit of Adam’s fall, in that by reason of that evil seed, which through him is communicated unto them, they are prone and inclined unto evil, though thousands of thousands be ignorant of Adam’s fall, neither ever knew of the eating of the forbidden fruit; so also many may come to feel the influence of this holy and divine seed and light, and be turned from evil to good by it, though they knew nothing of Christ’s coming in the flesh, through whose obedience and sufferings it is purchased unto them. And as we affirm it is absolutely needful, that those do believe the history of Christ’s outward appearance, whom it pleased God to bring to the knowledge of it; so we do freely confess, that even that outward knowledge is very comfortable to such as are subject to, and led by the inward seed and light. For not only does the sense of Christ’s love and sufferings tend to humble them, but they are thereby also strengthened in their faith, and encouraged to follow that excellent pattern which he has left us, who suffered for us, as says the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. 2:21. leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: and many times we are greatly edified and refreshed with the gracious sayings which proceed out of his mouth. The history then is profitable and comfortable with the mystery, and never without it; but the mystery is and may be profitable without the explicit and outward knowledge of the history.”

by virtue of a gift received from Christ, and under the immediate influence of his spirit; and that therefore, no unregenerate person can ever really be one of his ministers. And although multitudes intruded themselves into that sacred office, under the sanction of prevailing opinions and established systems, Friends bore a decided, a conscientious, and a living testimony, against all exercise of ministerial functions, unless authorized as above. They also deprecated in the strongest terms any system of maintenance, whether of tithe or otherwise, which, by instituting a stipendiary ministry, tended to pervert the Gospel of Christ, to annul his express injunction, "Freely you have received, freely give," and to sanction the practice of trading in holy things. This they were taught to consider as wholly unscriptural and anti-christian, and therefore embracing within itself the principles of its own destruction; inasmuch as, if incurring divine disapprobation, though the system might be long permitted, the purposes of the Almighty would ultimately be fulfilled, as his will prevails through the earth, in its utter extinction.

With opinions such as these, not lightly taken up, but under exercises of no ordinary character, the early Friends went forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; and it is not too much to say of a large proportion of them, that they were wise as serpents and harmless as doves. When George Fox at the Lord's command went forth, as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, "the world," says he, "was like a briary, thorny wilderness." And again, "When I came, in the Lord's mighty power with the word of life, into the world, the world swelled and made a noise like the raging waves of the sea. Priests and professors, magistrates and people, were all like a sea, when I came to proclaim the day of the Lord among them, and to preach repentance to them." And it was no matter of surprise that such should have been the case. Those views, which he and the early Friends were led to take of Christian doctrine and the principles of individual practice, were such, as to make them appear not only very singular, but their zealous and public reproof of what they justly esteemed to be evil, whether in the root or in the fruit, made them "seem to be opposed to existing institutions and enemies to all sorts of men;" but it was "for the Lord's sake."²

Having a testimony given them to bear against "a hireling ministry," they found it to be their place to resist, passively, the payment of all demands of an ecclesiastical nature; as well as to endeavor, in the most active and zealous manner, by their preaching and by their writings, to open the eyes of the people to the deception by which they were beguiled, and the bondage which enthralled them. This they were enabled to do, through the faithful exercise of their several gifts, in a very powerful and effectual manner; and it was one main source of the sufferings which the early Friends had to endure.

Another branch of that ministry which was committed to them, was that of drawing people off from a dependence upon those forms and ceremonies so much insisted upon in religion, and directing their attention to the substance, to that "ingrafted word," which is able to save the soul. With this view they testified to all kinds of professors, that "the incorruptible seed and word of God, that lives and abides forever," is that by which the great work of regeneration is begun, carried forward, and perfected in the souls

2 Isaac Pennington

of men,—and only in proportion as there is a cooperation therewith by obedience to its manifestations. This exposed them to much obloquy, and gained them many enemies; among those, more especially, who were either selfishly interested in, or superstitiously attached to, what are called the ordinances of religion:—such as placed all their hopes upon the practice of outward observances, though in connection with a belief in Christ and a reliance upon his merits, yet to the virtual exclusion or undervaluing of that inward work, the being born again of the spirit, without which, our Savior himself has expressly told us, we cannot see the kingdom of God. In conformity with these views, they found themselves called upon to lay aside both water baptism and the use of the bread and wine, called the sacrament; feeling their minds engaged rather to press after and by all means to hold up that spiritual baptism, and also that union and communion with Christ as the bread of life, which is essential and complete in itself. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” “Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

They saw to the end of all wars and fightings, and were called to renounce them, together with the root from which they spring. In the same way, they laid aside all oaths, agreeably with the command of Christ and his apostle, and in conformity with an evidence which they felt in themselves, that the bond of an oath was no longer necessary where the truth of the Gospel has become the governing principle of the soul. This became the fruitful source of suffering to Friends in the early times.

Those matters which relate to their outward deportment, dress and address, were the incessant occasion of persecution and abuse. As these wounded the pride of men, so they excited the contempt and malice of the corrupt nature. The refusing to take off the hat, for instance, excepting as a sign of worship to Almighty God, was one of the things that in those days put to the proof the spirit, by which professors and others were too much actuated. For although it is in itself a small matter, it was grievously offensive to the proud nature of man; and on that account occasioned Friends as much reproach and persecution, as some things of far greater moment, in which they were led to differ from other men.

The reader is now in possession of the chief particulars wherein Friends became so obnoxious to their contemporaries; and by means of which they drew upon themselves that large amount of suffering, they had for so long a period to endure; this, however, eventually purchased for the community at large, as well as for themselves, much of the liberty they have since enjoyed. The following short paragraphs, from a writer already quoted, setting forth and more clearly defining the moving principle which actuated the early Friends, will serve to illustrate the depth of those feelings, under which they were made willing to become as signs and wonders in their day. He says:—

Our work in the world, is to hold forth the virtue of Him that has called us; not to own anything in the world that God does not own. To forget our country, our kindred, our father’s house, and to live like persons of another country, of another kindred, of another family, [for Christ’s sake.] Not to do anything of ourselves, and which is pleasing to the old nature; but all our words, all our

conduct, yes, every thought in us is to become new. Whatever comes from us, is to come from the new principle of life in us, and to answer that in others; but we must not please the old nature at all, in ourselves or in any one else. Thus walking faithfully with God, we have a reward at present, and a crown in the end, which does and will countervail all the reproaches and hardships we can meet with in the world.

We are also to be witnesses for God, in the world: to be instruments in his hands, to bring others out of death and captivity into true life and liberty. We are to fight against the powers of darkness everywhere, as the Lord called us forth. And this we are to do in his wisdom, according to his will, in his power, and in his love, sweetness, and meekness. We are not to take ways according to our own wisdom,—there must be a strict watch set in the life lest that get up again;—nor must we speak such words as man’s wisdom would call wise; nor may we go in our own will to seek any; but the Lord must go before. Nor may we make use of our own strength, but feel his arm in our weakness. Nor may we go forth in that love, sweetness, or meekness, which is pleasing to the fleshly mind; but we must be true to God, handling the sword skillfully and faithfully, judging and cutting down the transgressor in the power and authority of God. And when the meek, the lowly, the humble spirit is reached and raised, then the true love, the sweetness, the tenderness, the meekness must go forth over that. The Lord God is rough with the transgressor, and all along the Scripture hews and judges him; and if we come forth in the same spirit, we shall find the same leadings where we meet with the same thing. For the Lord God will never be tender there, nor can that which comes from him, lives in him, is led by him, be tender there, where he is not.³

Chapter XVI

1672. William Dewsbury discharged from Warwick jail—Travels to Bristol—John Roberts; Anecdote respecting him, his wife, and William Dewsbury—Letter to George Fox from the north of England—George Fox in Worcester jail—Tried before Judge Hale—His opinion of George Fox—Extract from an epistle—William Dewsbury visited by John Whiting—Popish plot,—Friends suffer under a charge of being Jesuits—William Dewsbury confined six years at Warwick.

William Dewsbury was released from his long confinement in Warwick jail in the year 1672. At that time, there lay in prison throughout England and Wales above four hundred of the people called Quakers, many of them under sentence of premunire and banishment. Soon after the declaration of Indulgence was published, in consequence of an interview which George Whitehead and other Friends had with the king in council. When their grievously oppressed condition was laid before him, he was induced to issue an order for their discharge, and the remission of all pains and penalties adjudged against them. Under

3 Penington’s Works, vol. 1. p. 91, 92.

this instrument, William Dewsbury was set at liberty.

During the interval of several years which elapsed between this date and that of the epistle at the close of the last chapter, it can hardly be expected that many incidents would occur calculated to fill up the chasm in this history. This protracted imprisonment furnishes one out of many instances, which show, that the faith and constancy of Friends, though closely proved, were sufficient to preserve the sufferer from fainting under his trials. It should, however, be stated, that from what we may gather in two of his epistles, his mental suffering was so great at one time while under durance at Warwick, on account of the danger many Friends were in, from dissensions which had arisen in the Society, that his spirit was deeply wounded, and his bodily health impaired. His life on this occasion appears to have been in imminent danger; for his strength was so reduced that he was hardly able to speak, and to all appearance for several weeks his end was approaching. "But," says he, "God in his mercy restored strength in his appointed time." We have, however, reason to conclude, notwithstanding these facts, that he bore this imprisonment, aggravated as it probably was beyond most other occasions, with the same cheerful resignation as heretofore; and in proof of it we find, that he was enabled to write various animating addresses for the encouragement of other Friends under like suffering, whom the rage of persecution or the floods of temptation continued to assail. Several of these must be omitted; but I will not hesitate to add the following, which was written at the time when his detention was drawing towards a close. It is dated the 5th of the third month, 1671; and is as remarkable for its brevity, as for its fulness.

My dear Friends,

In these trying days, be not afraid of what man can do, whose breath is in his nostrils; but look up to the all-sufficiency of Almighty God, to stay your minds on him, who has counted you worthy to suffer for him. In all humility, walk faithfully before him unto the end: he is your reward, and will give unto you a crown of Life forever. Even so be it with you, in the name of the Lord, is the breathing of my soul for you whom my soul loves. And keep your meetings in the authority and life of the meek and patient Spirit, which wears out, and overcomes all things that are not of its own nature.

Read this in the fear of the Lord among Friends.

—W. D.

During the interval of liberty which followed his deliverance from this imprisonment, John Whiting, who was personally acquainted with him, informs us, that his travels were extensive in several parts of England, particularly in the west and north, of which no detailed account has been preserved. From Bristol, the 7th of third month, 1673, he addresses a letter to George Whitehead and Alexander Parker, and other brethren concerned in the general meeting then about to assemble in London; in which he excuses himself from being with them on the ground of the Lord having disposed of him in another way. "I am ordered otherwise," says he, "having much upon me while the door is open." In a postscript he

informs them, that “Friends are generally in a sweet state with God in this city and where I have passed, both to my comfort and yours in the Lord: blessed be his name forever.”

The following circumstances, narrated by Daniel Roberts of his father, John Roberts, in some very interesting memoirs which he has left respecting him, ought perhaps to have been introduced at a period somewhat earlier. Although the latter part only relates to William Dewsbury; yet as the point of the anecdote would have been lost by separating it from the narrative, and as it well illustrates some particulars peculiar to the early Friends, the reader will not object to my presenting him with the whole.

In the year 1665, it pleased the Lord to send two women Friends out of the north, to Cirencester; who inquiring after such as feared God, were directed to my father, as the likeliest person to entertain them. They came to his house, and desired a meeting. He granted it, and invited several of his acquaintances to sit with them. After some time of silence, the Friends spoke a few words, which had a good effect. The meeting being over, my father endeavored to engage them in discourse; but they said little, only recommended him to Richard Farnsworth, then prisoner for the testimony of truth in Banbury jail, where they were going. Upon this recommendation, my father went shortly after to the prison, in order to converse with Richard, where he met with the two women who had been at his house. The turnkey was denying them entrance, and telling them, he had an order not to let in any of those giddy-headed people; and therefore if they did go in, he would keep them there. But, upon my father’s desire, they were admitted along with him, and conducted through several rooms to a dungeon, where Richard Farnsworth was preaching through the grating to the people in the street.

Soon after they came in, he desisted; and after a little time of silence, turning to them, spoke to this purpose: “That Zaccheus being a man of low stature, and having a mind to see Christ, ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree: and our Savior knowing his good desires called to him, Zaccheus, come down, this day is salvation come to your house. Thus Zaccheus was like some in our day who are climbing up into the tree of knowledge, thinking to find Christ there. But the word now is, Zaccheus, come! come down! for that which is to be known of God is manifested within.” This, with more to the same purpose, was spoken with such authority, that, when my father came home, he told my mother, he had seen Richard Farnsworth, who had spoken to his condition as if he had known him from his youth. From this time, he patiently bore the cross.

Afterwards, perhaps in the year 1673,¹ when it pleased God to communicate to him a portion of the knowledge of his blessed truth, a necessity was laid upon him, one first-day morning, to go to the public worship house in Cirencester at the time of worship, not knowing what might be required of him there. He went; and standing with his hat on, the priest was silent for some time; but being asked, Why he did not go on, he answered, He could not while that man stood with his hat on. Upon this, some took him by the arm, and led him into the street, staying at the door to keep him out. But after waiting a little in stillness, he found himself clear and passed away. As he passed the market-place, the tie of his shoe slackened; and while he stooped down to fasten it, a man came

1 The year 1673 agrees with William Dewsbury’s journey westward to Bristol, etc. after his discharge from his eight years’ imprisonment at Warwick.

behind him, and struck him on the back a hard blow with a stone, "There, take that for Jesus Christ's sake." He answered, "So I do;" not looking back to see who it was, but quietly going on his way. A few days after, a man came and asked his forgiveness; telling him, he was the unhappy man who gave him the blow on the back, and he could have no rest since he had done it.

Not long after, three Friends came that way, who found the like concern, namely, Robert Sylvester, Philip Grey, and Thomas Onyon. These, standing in the steeple house with their hats on, though they said nothing, the priest was silent: and being asked if he was not well, he answered, he could not go forward, while those dumb dogs stood there. Whereupon the people dragged them out: and the priest afterwards informing a justice, that they interrupted him in divine service, they were bound over to the quarter sessions. My father, at their desire accompanied them to the sessions: and when they were called, and the priest had accused them, the bench, in a rage, without asking them any questions, ordered their court orders to be made out. This unjust and illegal proceeding kindled my father's zeal; insomuch that he, stepping forward, called to the justices, saying, "Are those who sit on the bench sworn to do justice? Is there not a man among you that will do the thing that is right?" Whereupon John Stephens, of Lypeat, then chairman, cried out, "Who are you, sirrah? What is your name?" My father telling him his name, he said, "I am glad I have you here: I have heard of you: you deserve a stone doublet: there is many an honest man than you hanged." "It may be so," answered my father, "but what do you think becomes of those who hang honest men?" The justice replied, "I'll send you to prison: and if any insurrection or tumult be in the land, I'll come and cut your throat first with my own sword; for I fear to sleep in my bed, lest such fanatics should come and cut my throat." And snatching up a ball of wax, he violently threw it at my father, who avoided the blow by stepping aside. Their court orders were then made out, and they were all sent to prison.

The same evening my [great] uncle Solliss, who was one of the justices on the bench came to the prison, and calling for my father, asked him, If he was willing to have his liberty to go home to his wife and family: "Upon what terms, uncle?" said my father.

Justice.—Upon such terms, that the jailer open the doors and let you out.

John Roberts.—What! without entering into any recognizances?

Justice.—Yes.

John Roberts.—Then I accept of my liberty; but I admire, uncle, how you and several others could sit upon the bench, as with your thumbs in your mouths, when you should speak a word in behalf of the innocent.

Justice.—You must learn to live under a law, cousin; and if you will accept of your liberty till next sessions, you may have it: if not, stay where you are.

So they parted; and on the morrow my father went home, having also the jailer's leave.

In the night, a concern came upon him with such weight, that it made him tremble till the bed shook under him. My mother asking the reason of it, he answered, "The Lord requires hard things of me: if it would please him, I had rather lay down my life, than obey him in what he requires at

my hands." To which my mother replied, "If you are fully persuaded the Lord requires it of you, I would not have you to disobey him: for he will require nothing of us but what he will enable us to go through: therefore we have good cause to trust in him." On which he said, "I must go to this John Stephens, who is my great enemy, and sent me to prison, where he said he would secure me; and as my uncle Solliss in kindness has given me leave to come home, I can expect no more favor from him, if I now go and run myself into the mouth of my adversary. But I must go, whatever I suffer." He arose and prepared for his journey; but dared eat or drink nothing. When he mounted his horse, the command of the Lord was to him, "Remember Lot's wife; don't look back." So on he rode very cheerfully eight or nine miles, till he came within sight of the justice's house; and then he let in the reasoner, who reasoned him out of all his courage, presenting to his mind that his uncle Solliss and all his neighbors would say, he had no regard for his wife and family, thus to push himself into the hands of his greatest enemy. This brought such a cloud over his mind, that he alighted off his horse, and sat down upon the ground to spread his cause before the Lord. After he had waited some time in silence, the Lord appeared and dissipated the cloud, and his word was to him, "Go, and I will go with you, and I will give you a threshing instrument, and you shall thresh the mountains." Now he was exceedingly overcome by the love of God; and I have often heard him say, he was filled like a vessel that needed vent; and said in his heart, "Your presence is enough." Proceeding to the house with great satisfaction, it being pretty early in the morning, and seeing the stable door open, he went to the groom, and desired him to put up his horse. While this was doing, the justice's son and his clerk came up, who roughly said, "I thought you had been in Gloucester castle."

John Roberts.—So I was.

Clerk.—And how did you come out?

John Roberts.—When you have authority to demand it, I can give you an answer. But my business is with your master, if I may speak with him.

Clerk.—You may, if you will promise to be civil.

John Roberts.—If you see me uncivil, I desire you to tell me of it.

They went in; and my father following them, they bid him take a turn in the hall, and they would acquaint the justice with his being there. He was soon called in; and my father no sooner saw the justice, but he believed the Lord had been at work upon him: for as he behaved to him with the fierceness of a lion before, he now appeared like a lamb, meeting him with a pleasant countenance, and taking him by the hand, said, "Friend John, how do you do?" My father answered, "Pretty well;" and then proceeded thus: "I am come in the fear and dread of heaven, to warn you to repent of your wickedness with speed, lest the Lord cut the thread of your life, and send you to the pit that is bottomless. I am come to warn you with great love, whether you will hear or forbear, and to preach the everlasting Gospel to you." The justice replied, "You are a welcome messenger to me; that is what I have long desired to hear."—"The everlasting Gospel," returned my father, "is the same that God sent his servant John to declare, when he saw an angel fly through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice. Fear God, and give glory to his name, and worship him who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water." The justice then caused my father to sit

down by him on the couch, and said, "I believe your message is from God, and I receive it as such. I am sorry I have done you wrong: I will never wrong you more." After much more discourse, he offered my father the best entertainment his house afforded; but my father excused himself from eating or drinking with him at that time, expressing his kind acceptance of his love; and so in much love they parted.

The same day, William Dewsbury had appointed a meeting at Tedbury, where my mother went. But she was so concerned on account of my father's exercise, that she could receive little benefit from the meeting. After the meeting was ended, William Dewsbury walked to and fro in a long passage, groaning in spirit; and by and by came up to my mother; and though she was a stranger to him, he laid his hand upon her head, and said, "Woman, your sorrow is great; I sorrow with you." Then walking a little to and fro as before, he came to her again, and said, "Now the time is come, that those who marry must be as though they married not, and those who have husbands as though they had none; for the Lord calls for all to be offered up." By this she saw the Lord had given him a sense of her great burden; for she had not discovered her exercise to any. And it gave her such ease in her mind, that she went home rejoicing in the Lord. She no sooner got home, than she found my father returned from Lypeat, where his message was received in such love as was far from their expectation: the sense of which much broke them into tears, in consideration of the goodness of God, in so eminently making way for and helping them that day.

The following letter addressed to George Fox, although there is no date attached to it, belongs to this period. In the absence of further particulars respecting the journey to which it alludes, it is considered to be worthy of a place here, not only on account of the information it contains, but for the evidence it affords, of that sweet fellowship and harmony which subsisted between the two Friends, both of them leading characters and eminent in their day. It also conveys a very pleasing testimony to the estimation in which George Fox was held among his brethren.

Dear brother,

In the covenant of life, in Christ our Head, my soul salutes you, and sympathizes with you in your exercise in your bonds; with breathings to the Lord to sweeten all our ways,—what he calls us unto,—with his living presence, to the perfecting of his glory forever. Amen.

Dear George Fox, I have been through many counties in the north country, and the comfortable presence of the Lord did manifest itself in all the assemblies of his people, to all our comfort in him our head and life, blessed forever! All was very peaceable; and a great resort of all sorts of people to Friends' meetings; and not any opposition, but all meetings separated in peace. It would be too tedious to mention the names of those who minded their love to you, through all the counties where I traveled: but generally all the ancient Friends in Cumberland, Northumberland, Bishopric, [Durham,] and Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and in this town, [the name nowhere mentioned] desired to have their dear love remembered to you. The deep sense of your labor and travail is fresh upon their spirits; which causes many prayers to be poured forth before the Lord, if it be his good will and pleasure, to give you strength of body and liberty, to

travel among them to their great comfort as in days of old and years past. But in the will of our God our souls rest with you, in the pleasure of our God, in whom I remain,

Your dear brother,

—W. D.

If the foregoing letter be correctly placed as to date, the “bonds,” to which it refers, and under which George Fox was then suffering, answers to his imprisonment in Worcester jail. In that prison he was confined nearly twelve months, and was at length by habeas corpus brought up to London, to await his trial in the court of King’s Bench. In this case again. Sir Matthew Hale was his judge, who had now learned how to estimate the character of such men as George Fox. For, after the decision of the court had been given in the prisoner’s favor, some of his adversaries knowing the consequences of his refusing to swear, used their endeavors to persuade the judges to tender to him again the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, on the pretended ground of his being a dangerous person to be at liberty. Judge Hale, whose character stands so preeminent, replied, That he had indeed heard some such reports of him, but he had also heard many more good reports; he therefore with the other judges ordered him to be set free by proclamation.

The epistle from which the subsequent extracts are taken, is dated the 14th of the eleventh month, 1675; and the portion selected being very much of a general character, is thought to be too valuable to be excluded from this volume.

Dear Friends,

Whom the Lord has visited in this his glorious day, and plucked as brands out of the fire to wait upon him, in his light, that his great work of regeneration may be perfected in you, to your eternal comfort, and the glory of the name of our God forever. My dear Friends, seeing that many are called and few chosen; many convinced who are not converted; and many come forth with us who are not of us, as by sad experience has been witnessed;—from the deep sense of this working of the enemy, I am constrained to send this epistle among you;—knowing the kingdom of God is compared unto ten virgins, five wise and five foolish, who all had lamps, and slumbered in the secure mind, until they were awakened to enter in with their Lord. Then were the foolish virgins made manifest, who, though they had lamps like the other, yet lacking the oil, they neither did nor could enter in. Oh! dear and tender Friends, let all dread the Lord, who make mention of his name in the light of Christ; for this parable is to you, unto whom the Lord has sent, to preach to you and in you the word of his kingdom.

And this is on my spirit in the word of the Lord, to you all, convinced of the precious truth of our God, that you may have a certain knowledge how it is with you, and how you escaped the subtle wiles of the enemy, which have hindered so many from the possession of the life of truth. Examine and search your hearts, with the

light of Christ, that you may truly discern how the enemy draws into foolish conceitedness, in the outside and formal profession of the truth, feeding upon the knowing part, and so stops the hunger that should reach the life. And then in an exalted mind to say, I see, know, am clothed, and lack nothing, when such are blind, naked, miserable, and lack all things. And this is the state of the foolish virgins, who dwell in the outward court, and place all their confidence in the form and outside, and in the profession of truth, and so have lost the sense of that heavenly hunger, which must possess the life ‘hid with Christ in God,’ or mourn out its days in sorrow.

Therefore, all dear Friends, watch diligently in the heart-searching light, that you may all discern this mystery of iniquity; that so the enemy may not prevail against you, to turn you aside either to the right hand or to the left. Wait upon the Lord for strength to preserve you out of whatever he has convinced you to be evil, and thus answer God’s witness in the regulation of your conduct, and in the uprightness of your hearts stand clear before the Lord, that you are ready to do and suffer whatever he calls you to. And when you have done all this, be watchful in the heart-searching light, that the enemy draw not your minds, to place confidence in the work of righteousness you have done, as the ground and hope of your calling in Christ; and lacking faith in him, cause you to rest in your services: and so, come short of the hidden life, enjoyed through faith in the light and life of Christ, our righteousness.

I beseech you, dear Friends, wait to know this great mystery. The entrance to it is by the strait gate and all the foolish virgins, though their lamp in the outward profession be never so glorious, yet through pride in their attainments, never enter into this rest; for this is the furthest that ever any come who make a profession of the truth, and go from us, but are not of us.

You, tender Friends, that truly seek God’s glory, and so love his light that you are willing to give up life and all to do his will,—when the enemy would draw you to rest in what you have done, and so take the jewels of God, and play the harlot and deck yourselves,—dread the Lord, and in his light you [will] see more light. You [will] see, that all you have done is but your duty and your reasonable service, which you must do, or otherwise perish eternally. And thus, your poor souls travel on in the footsteps of the flock of the mournful companions, who are weeping in secret and inwardly seeking the Lord God, to be married unto him in that hidden life, which is hid with Christ in God. And, until you enjoy the marriage union, wait in deep humiliation, in the light, for the Lord to create you to a lively hope in Christ Jesus, the second Adam.

In the year 1676, John Whiting, who lived at Nailsey, in Somersetshire, in the course of a visit which he paid in some of the midland counties, went to see William Dewsbury at Warwick; who, although not then a prisoner, had permanently removed his residence from Yorkshire to that town. I conclude that, previous to this time, his wife died, as no mention is made of her in the narrative given by John Whiting, which is as follows:

William Dewsbury then dwelt in his own hired house, with whom I had pretty much discourse, in his garden, of many things to my great comfort and satisfaction: for he was very free and open to me beyond what I could expect, being a young man, and a stranger outwardly to him. He told

me some things I shall never forget. He was an extraordinary man in many ways, and I thought, as exact a pattern of a perfect man as I ever knew. He gave me an epistle to carry to Friends, and coming to the door with me, when I came away the last time, told me, at taking leave of him, that the blessing of the Lord would be with me if I was faithful: which was an encouragement to me, and through the Lord's goodness, I have found it so, beyond my desert; blessed be his holy name forever!

We have already seen that the rising of the Fifth Monarchy men was made a pretext for exercising, or rather for augmenting the cruelties already practiced on the Friends; and now in the year 1678, the time of the Popish plot, they were made to suffer under the charge of being Jesuits; a plea that was more than once resorted to, as a sanction for persecution. On this plea, William Dewsbury was this year cast into Warwick jail, and although the notorious Titus Oates gave a certificate under his own hand to clear him from that odious charge, it was in vain. He was confined there for a period of at least six years, and was at last set at liberty on the general proclamation of James II., which was dated the 18th of April, 1685.

Chapter XVII

1680. William Dewsbury loses his little granddaughter and attendant in prison, Mary Samm—Particulars of her illness and death—Address, suggested by the event—Reflections on his character in reference thereto—William Dewsbury finally discharged from prison—Epistle.

It was during the time of his imprisonment, early in the year 1680, that this meek and patient servant of the Lord was visited with domestic affliction in the decease of his granddaughter, Mary Samm, a child of twelve years and four months old, who had come from Bedfordshire, where her parents lived, to reside with her grandfather, while prisoner in Warwick jail. William Dewsbury had two daughters married in that county, one to John Samm; the other to John Rush. This we learn from George Fox, having in the year 1677, as mentioned in his Journal, met with William Dewsbury, then on a visit to his son-in-law, Rush: on which occasion, the former was accompanied by the latter to several meetings in that neighborhood.

The following is the account which William Dewsbury himself gives of the last hours of his granddaughter, Mary Samm, who dwelt with her grandfather' William Dewsbury, at the Sergeant's Ward, in Warwick jail, where he was and is prisoner for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ."

On the 1st day of the second month, 1680, it pleased the Lord to afflict her with a violent fever, that brought her very low in a little time. Great had been her exercise of spirit, as to her condition and state with God; weeping many times when she was alone. Her aunt, Joan Dewsbury, asked her, why, when she was well, she walked so often alone in the garden, and was so sorrowful? She

answered, "Dear aunt, I am troubled in my conscience for lack of a full assurance of my eternal salvation. For, not any one knows my exercise, but the Lord alone, that I have gone through since I came to Warwick. It was begun a little before I came, but it was only a little. Since I came to Warwick, this was my exercise;—I thought I should not live long, and that if I died, I did not know where my soul would go. But, I hope the Lord will give me satisfaction before I die. It is but hope; yet, for this hope my soul shall praise the name of the Lord forever." She continued, at that time, praising the name of the Lord, and making melody with joyful sounds, many times in her great affliction.

The next day, some Friends being in the room with her, she was much opened, in declaring the dealings of the Lord with her in time past. "I have been twice in my days," said she, "nigh unto death, but the Lord in his tender mercy prolonged my life, that I might seek his face in the light of Christ, and come to be acquainted with him before I go hence." Adding, "If this distemper do not abate, I must die; but my soul shall go to eternal joy,—eternal and everlasting life and peace with my God forever! Oh! praises, praises to your majesty, O my God! who help me to go through with patience what I am to endure." After some time, she said, "Friends, we must all go hence, one after another, and they that live the longest, know and endure the greatest sorrow. Therefore, O Lord, if it be your will, take me to yourself, that my soul may rest in peace with you."—"Oh! praises, praises, be to your holy name forever, in your will being done with me, to take me to yourself, where I shall be in heavenly joy, yes, in heavenly joy forever and forevermore."

The day following she desired all to go forth of the room, for she wished to be alone. And after a considerable time, when we heard her groan upon her sick bed, her mother and grandfather went to her, when she said to them, "I have now received full satisfaction of my eternal salvation; it is now done, it is now done! And, dear mother, when you or any of my sisters die, I desire the Lord may go along with you. For I am very willing to die, that the Lord may glorify his name this day, in his will being done with me."—Many times would she be praying to the Lord, day and night; "O Lord, lay no more upon me than you give me strength to bear and go through with patience; that your will may be done, that your will may be done;" (many times repeated.) "Oh! help me, help me, O my God! that I may praise your holy name forever."

Thus she continued, very often praising the name of the Lord with joyful sounds, and singing high praises to his holy name forever and forevermore. And being much spent with lifting up her voice in high praises to God, through fervency of spirit, and her body being very weak, her grandfather went into the room, and desired her to be as still as she possibly could, and keep her mind inward and stayed upon the Lord, and see if she could have a little rest and sleep. She answered, "Dear grandfather, I shall die, and I cannot but praise the name of the Lord while I have a being. I do not know what to do to praise his name enough while I live. But while there is life, there is hope; but I do believe it is better for me to die than live." Thus she continued speaking of the goodness of the Lord from day to day, which caused many tears to flow from the eyes of those who heard her.

Her grandfather coming to her, asked her how she did; she replied to him and to her mother,—"I have had no rest this night nor to day. I did not know but I should have died this night, and very hardly I got through it: but I shall die today, and a grave shall be made, and my body put into a hole; and my soul shall go to heavenly joy, yes, to heavenly joy and everlasting peace forevermore!"

Then she said, "Dear grandfather, I do believe you will not stay long behind me, when I am gone." He answered, "Dear granddaughter, I shall come as fast as the Lord orders my way."—Then she praised the name of the Lord with high praises and joyful sounds for a season; and then desired her mother to let her be taken up for a little time, saying, "It may be it will give me some ease." They sent for her grandfather, who said to her, "If this be your last day, and whereon you are to die, it is not safe for you to be taken forth of your bed. Dear Mary, you shall have all attendance that is convenient; as, to set you up in your bed and to lay you down again; but to take you up, we are not willing." She replied, "Well, grandfather, what you see best for me I am willing to have so."

When her mother and aunt set her up in her bed, she said it did refresh her and gave her some ease, and as they were ordering what was to be done about her bed, she said, "Oh! what a deal of ado is here in ordering a bed for one who is upon her death bed." Her aunt said, "Mary, do you think you are upon your death bed?" She answered, "Yes, yes, I am upon my death bed; I shall die today, and I am very willing to die, because I know it is better for me to die than live." Her aunt replied, "I do believe it is better for you to die than live." She said, "Yes, it is well for me to die." Her mother then said to her, "Mary, are you well satisfied in leaving me and your sisters, and coming to Warwick to your grandfather?" She answered, "Yes, mother, I am very well satisfied: for I saw my way was made clear for coming to Warwick. My grandfather and I have lived so comfortably together, that I am fully satisfied as to my coming to him. I have been very well, as to any matter of sickness, until this sickness came upon me. Dear mother, I would have you remember my love to my dear sisters, relations and friends; and now I have nothing to do, I have nothing to do." A friend answered, "Nothing, Mary, but to die."

She desired her mother to give her a little drink, "Then," said she, "I will see if I can have a little rest and sleep before I die." When the drink came, she took a little, and desired her mother to give her a little to wash her mouth. After which she asked what time of day it was. It being the latter part of the day, her grandfather said, "The chimes are going four." She said, "I thought it had been more; I will see if I can have a little rest and sleep before I die." And so she lay still, and had sweet rest and sleep. Then she awoke without any complaint; and in a quiet peaceable, frame of spirit laid down her head in peace, when the clock struck the fifth hour, on the 9th day of the second month, 1680.

We whose names are underwritten, were eye and ear witnesses of what is before expressed, as near as could be taken, and it does not vary much from what she declared, as to the substance, though many more sweet and comfortable expressions passed from her, but for brevity sake, we who stood by her when she drew her last breath, are willing to publish this only.

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY, HER GRANDFATHER.

—MARY SAMM, HER MOTHER.

—JOAN DEWSBURY, HER AUNT.

—HANNAH WHITEHEAD, A FRIEND.

The preceding account had prefixed to it by William Dewsbury, the following address, from which it will not be unprofitable to subjoin an extract:

An exhortation to all people, to prize their time, in making their calling and election sure, before they go hence and be no more.

From the deep sense of your own nothingness and your need of the help of Christ Jesus, the true Light and blessed Savior, to whom you cry and pray continually, that he would perfect his great work of regeneration, in leading you in the footsteps of the tribulated companions, who go weeping and seeking the Lord their God, asking the way to Zion, with their faces there;—no more let your eyes slumber in peace, nor your eyelids have rest, until you be assured that the Lord is your God: that he has blotted out your sins, and done away your iniquities for his name's sake, and has accepted of you in his new and everlasting covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus. So, you that were afar off in your rebellious nature, of which you are now ashamed, through true repentance and obedience to the light, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; which gives you full assurance of your eternal salvation, and purges your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

And whoever you are, who come to witness this blessed work of regeneration wrought in your hearts, as before written, being created to a lively hope in Christ Jesus, (mark,) you are to watch and pray, that in the exercise and improvement of this hope, you may receive strength to purify yourselves as he is pure. Thus, all who are worshippers of the Father, come to worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him. And these are they whom he perfects forever through the sanctification of his spirit. So is this Scripture fulfilled in you, 'He that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.'¹ And these are his children who walk in the light, and have their fellowship with the Father of light in Christ Jesus, their blessed Savior, and one with another in his humble, meek, pure, and blessed nature; and so become his chosen jewels and citizens of Zion, who walk in the light of the New Jerusalem, as it is written in the Scriptures of truth, 'The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light thereof.'

It might not be difficult to draw an affecting picture of the forlorn condition of William Dewsbury at this time, now rendered more so by the decease of his little granddaughter, his prison companion and attendant. Nor is it natural or probable, that she should have been thus removed while filling an office at once so cheering and useful, without a sensible mind like his feeling some pangs of suffering. At the same time, such had long been the habitual piety and resignation of spirit in this real Christian, that we are of necessity bound to contemplate him in his true character. We must view him, yielding to this as to other painful dispensations and privations, which in the ordering of unerring wisdom had through life been meted to him, with that holy submission which breathes the language of "Not my will but yours be done;" and rejoicing in the manifest foretaste of that glorious state, which one so young was thus called to inherit. We may conclude that our friend had now attained to the age of somewhat beyond threescore years, and that his infirmities were such as to render his own further tarriance here extremely uncertain. He would therefore himself be looking towards a future state, with feelings in unison with those of the

¹ John 3:21.

apostle, when he told the Ephesians, he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which he assured them was far better than to remain: and William Dewsbury with such feelings would regard the early flight of his grandchild as an event, to her transcendently happy.

We are informed by himself, that during the nineteen years of his confinement at Warwick, in four of them only was he a close prisoner: and I think we have reason for concluding, that the latter period of his imprisonment there, was rendered less irksome by that extension of liberty which such information implies. Still it is painful to contemplate the circumstance, excepting as regards his patient endurance of the wrongs thus heaped upon him, that his bonds were continued to so late a period of his life, and that the king's proclamation, by which he was finally enlarged, came when the full enjoyment of his liberty was no longer in his power; being then not only advanced in years, but greatly disabled through a series of imprisonments and sufferings for so many years. In the year 1686, about eighteen months before he died, towards the conclusion of one of his epistles to Friends, we find the following affecting paragraph.

My dear Friends, through the sharp persecutions that were endured in the heat of the day, and many long imprisonments; being nineteen years a prisoner in this town of Warwick, and four of them kept a close prisoner, it has pleased God to permit my health to be impaired, so that many times I am forced to rest two or three times, in going to the meeting in the town, not being of ability to travel as in years past. I do, in the love of God, visit you with this epistle, desiring it may be carefully read in the fear of the Lord, in the assemblies of his people, that peace and unity may be among you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The following "General epistle to Friends, from this ancient servant of Christ," may here be introduced.

My dear Friends and brethren,

Who are called out of the world, and plucked as brands out of the fire, by the heavenly power of God, who has convinced you of his everlasting truth, in the light of Jesus Christ: as you have received the truth in some measure, watch and pray, and believe in the name of Christ; that you may feel his power in the heavenly inspiration of his blessed spirit, to lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, that all that is not obedient to the light of Christ, may be kept down, and buried in the heavenly baptism under the sentence of death; as it was and is with all the children of God, who have received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may have no confidence in ourselves, but trust alone in the living God. This will keep you all in the sweet, seasoned, savory spirit of life, in all your words, trading, and dealings among the children of men. Then will you, who retain the savor of the heavenly life in the blessed truth, be manifest and known to all people as the salt of the earth; so that every one according to your measure may be felt, upon all occasions, continually flowing forth, in the savory spirit of life, to the comfort of your own families, and the city of God, who over all is blessed forever!

And, my dear Friends, I desire all to be watchful, that not any come short of what is required of them, both rulers of families and parents of children. While you have a day to be with them, call your families together

to wait upon the Lord, in the fear of his name. Certainly, the Lord will answer the end of your endeavors, by causing the savory life to flow through you, to season your servants and children; that the church of God may be in every particular family and habitation of his people.

Great is the concern upon my spirit for the children of all who profess the blessed truth of God, that all parents may stand in their places, and bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. And that while in their minority and tender years, and under their tuition, they may not be too indulgent to them or allow the spirit of the world to rule in them, or let them have their own wills, and do those things which are not according to the truth of God; and connive at, instead of reproving their children, and crossing the spirit of the world in them, and causing them to be content with such things as are according to the truth of our God. For lack of this carefulness in parents, the spirit of this world is strengthened in children, when it should be kept down by the heavenly authority and power that the Lord has given to parents, to rule over them. And all walk in the wisdom of God, with moderation in all things, clothed in modest apparel, and laying by all superfluity, so that your good examples may reach the witness of God in your children. But for lack of this care in some parents, and being too indulgent and full of lenity to their children, they grow rude, stubborn, self-willed and disobedient to parents, to the wounding of their hearts who have thus neglected their duty.

Therefore I desire and beseech you, that you slight not the opportunity God gives you in this weighty concern, to be in all things good examples to all who live with you, both children and servants, that by your godly conversation and heavenly exhortations, you may raise up the witness for God in them; exercising the power God has given you, to keep down the evil nature, while they live with you.

When your children grow up, take them to meetings; and keep your eyes over them, that they behave themselves soberly according to your exhortations. Encourage them in well-doing; so will the Lord bless your sweet and heavenly behavior in your families; and servants will bless God that ever it was their lot to come into your families, in that their spirits were sweetly seasoned with the truth, by your heavenly care over them. Your children, also, will magnify the name of the Lord for your blessed care, heavenly instructions, and godly endeavors every way, for their good in this world, and their eternal happiness in the world to come. This will crown the hoary heads of parents with joy, to see their endeavors sanctified to their children, and their offspring made the offspring and children of God. Blessed be his name forever, who hears the prayers of his people, who are exercised daily in the heavenly inspiration of his holy Spirit, to call upon his holy name, not only for enemies but for a blessing upon their families, and for all that love the truth of our God. These are the families that are a sweet savor unto the Lord, whom he guards with the angel of his presence, and will make them manifest and known to all people, that they are his chosen jewels, whom he will preserve in the day when he will pour forth his vengeance upon the heathen that know him not, and upon the families that call not upon his name.

And if any of these children of heavenly-minded parents, when removed from under their tuition, for lack of watchfulness, grow careless and turn their backs on the blessed truth of God, and trample all the care and good counsel of their parents under their feet, to satisfy their own wills in the pride and vanity of this evil world, to

the wounding of the hearts of their careful and loving parents, they will be clear of their blood; while they [such children] shall reap the fruits of their doings except they repent.

And all you, young and tender people, with others that come among Friends, through the education of your careful parents, masters or mistresses, I have a concern upon my spirit to write to you, that you do not rest in an outward profession of the truth, received by education, but watch unto the heart-searching light of Christ in you, which will let you see that you must be regenerated and born again, and so be made real and faithful Friends, by the heavenly inspiration of the powerful spirit of God in you. And if you be carefully upon your watch, you will see judgment upon all in you that is not obedient to the light of Christ, in whose light you will see more light, even your great necessity for the enjoyment of the life that is hid with Christ in God. This will cause you to pray without ceasing, that the Lord would enable you to loathe and abhor the pride, pomp, and pleasure of this evil world, and give you assurance of God's love to your souls. And until you enjoy it, in all places of your retirement, you will pour forth your supplications with tears to the Lord, as the blessed and heavenly travelers and companions did and do, who could not find the kingdom of God in outward observations, though none were more careful in observing what is made known to them to be the will of God. But the kingdom of God consists not in outward observations, therefore, in the light press forward, according to your spiritual hunger and thirst, in true poverty of spirit, weeping and seeking the Lord your God, asking the way to Zion, with your faces thitherward, that you may enjoy salvation for walls and bulwarks.

Oh, you blessed children of the Lord! lift up your heads, and stay your minds upon the Lord, waiting patiently upon him. He will turn your sorrows into everlasting rejoicing, and seal you up with his holy Spirit of promise, in the marriage union with himself; and will give you assurance of your eternal salvation. Then will you certainly know the kingdom of God to be within you, and the anointing to teach you, which will enable you to delight in taking up the cross daily, in true obedience to the light of Christ, all the days you have a being among the children of men. Then will you, in the name of the Lord, trample upon all the pride, pomp, pleasures, and vanity of this evil world; to the great comfort of your dear and careful parents, masters and mistresses, whose tuition you were under in your tender years, and of all that walk in the precious truth of our God, who is over all blessed forever. Amen.

And all dear Friends and brethren, seeing the Lord, who turns the hearts of men as the rivers of waters, and in his lovingkindness so orders those in authority, that the prison doors are opened once more in our day, and we enjoy peace and quietness according to his blessed will; praises be to his holy name forever. I have a concern upon my spirit that all Friends and brethren have their hearts affected as mine is, to live in the sense of the mercies of the Lord. And, for the time to come, every one endeavor to prevent the enemy making disunion among Friends and brethren, as of late years he has been doing, by public opposition in some, and others, not patiently keeping in their places, have also separated. The difference being so public, has caused many a sorrowful heart and given cause to the enemies of God to rejoice. This has been a greater exercise and trouble to me, than all the sharp persecutions and imprisonments I have endured for the word of God and testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore in the love of God, I beseech and entreat you all, who have been or are concerned in what is before written, to let the love of God so abound, that in it all labor for peace and unity in Christ the Prince of peace, who in love laid down his life for us, when we were enemies: and in our age he has called many of his children to give up their lives in the heat of the day, weeks, months, and years, to gather enemies to the knowledge of God and union with him. Therefore wait for the heavenly wisdom, to bear one with another; that if any, who are conscientious to God, and blameless in their conduct, having a concern upon their spirits to edify the people, do declare the truth in public assemblies, I beseech you in the love of God, that not any through disaffection show at least any public opposition. But rather, if there be occasion for the party to be spoken to, speak to him in private. So will the enemy be prevented from casting stumbling blocks in the way of tender-spirited people, who come in love to be comforted in the meeting. And in so doing it will cause love and unity to abound among Friends, and in the love of God all will be restored and brought into unity again who have been scattered; and to meet all together in the everlasting truth, to feel the healer of breaches, who is the restorer of the desolate, exalted to reign in his kingdom in all your hearts; and to offer up a peace-offering, in passing by all offenses, that have caused disunion: and to bind you all up in the unity of the spirit and bond of everlasting peace. And meet all together, you who profess God's blessed truth, to praise his holy name, all as one and one as all, while we are in these mortal bodies, and forever when time here shall be no more. Even so be it with you all, says my soul, in the name of the Lord, to whom are my prayers, that all may be accomplished as above written. And, until it be so with you, I shall remain your exercised brother in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

Given forth in the movings of the peaceable spirit and word of reconciliation, in the Lord Jesus Christ; to whom are my prayers, that all who are convinced may wait to be made of the number of the slain of the Lord, and conformable to Christ in his death. That they may witness his quickening power to raise them up in the resurrection of life, to enter into the gates of Zion, to dwell in the city of New Jerusalem, where peace is within her gates, and quietness among all that have their habitation therein, having salvation for walls and bulwarks; and such are blessed of the Lord, preserved by him, to the honor of his name forever, Amen.

—W. D.

Warwick, 4th of Tenth month, 1686

Chapter XVIII

1688. William Dewsbury visits London—Attends Gracechurch street meeting—Sermon and Prayer.

Notwithstanding William Dewsbury's age, declining state of health, and great infirmities, feeling himself a little strengthened, and having an ardent desire once more to visit the great city and to labor among Friends there, he had faith to venture from home, arriving in London in the third month of the year 1688. He also entertained the hope of attending the Yearly Meeting of Friends, which was to be held there on the 4th of the following month. Soon after his arrival in the metropolis, namely, on the 6th of the third month, he attended a meeting for worship at Gracechurch street, where he preached the following powerful and impressive Sermon, the only one of his which has been preserved. It is given in *Sewel's History*.

My Friends,

Except you be regenerated and born again, you cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This is the word of the Lord God to all people this day. This lies not in airy profession, and in vain imagination, and whatsoever else it is that you deck yourselves withal: you must every particular man and woman be born again, else you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. This was the doctrine of Christ, in that prepared body wherein he appeared in the world and preached to Nicodemus. This is a standing doctrine to this moment of time, and will be so while any man breathes upon the earth; there is no other way, no other gate to enter into life, but by this great work of regeneration. Now, to enforce people to come to this great work, and to set forward from earth to heaven—all being driven out of paradise by the cherubim set with a flaming sword, there is no returning to that blessed life, but by the loss of that life that did grieve the Spirit of God, and which caused man to be driven out. There is no other way of return again, but by this new birth. As you are all driven and forced out of paradise, and the flaming sword and the cherubims are set to keep the way of the tree of life, so you must return into the favor of God again, by the light of Christ. You have line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, to direct your minds to the light of Christ Jesus. As the first Adam was made a living soul, so the second Adam is a quickening spirit. This know for certain, no man or woman can be quickened, and raised up into the life of the second Adam, until the life of the first Adam be taken away.

So now, let every one of you deal plainly with your own hearts, [and inquire] how you came to be slain to the life of the first Adam, in which life there was a working of the mystery of iniquity in every part of man. One cries "Lo, here is Christ;" another, "Lo, there is Christ;" and every one is following his own imagination about the letter of the Scripture; this is still but the vain spirit of man, running and striving to recover himself; and this is the cause there is so much profession of God, and so little of his nature appearing among the sons and daughters of men.

Now, all that come to be regenerated, must come to the light of Christ; there is no other way to it. He will search your hearts, and try your reins, and set your sins in order before you, and trace out the iniquities that compass you about. You must see yourselves a lost people, a sinful people, and so come to feel the weight of your sins upon your consciences; there is no other way to come to life. You will never complain of sin till you are burdened with it, till you have a trumpet sounding in your ears, to awaken you, that you may arise from the dead, that Christ may give you light. There is no other way, dear people: you must bring your deeds to the light

of Christ, and abide the sentence of condemnation. If you save your lives, you lose them; if you will lose your lives for Christ's sake, there is no danger of your eternal life. John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner declared, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that comes after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Are you the better for reading the Scriptures, if you know not this fiery baptism, which all must know who are regenerated? Deceive not yourselves: Christ will appear in flaming fire, and take vengeance on all them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I stand here as a witness of the Lord of life this day: there is no way for people to come to salvation, but they must know Christ revealed in their hearts. What is he doing, but rendering vengeance upon the carnal mind, self-pleasing, and all inordinate affections;—he comes with vengeance to take away your life; he will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. If you know not this, you are not a true Christian, you will never look death in the face with joy, nor go down to the grave with triumph. If you live at home in the body, and flee for your life, and will not be willing to lose your life for Christ, if you are called to it; and if you will not have Christ to wash you, some for shyness, and some for self-love will refuse this—if Christ does not wash you, you have no part in him.

You must come to Christ, to purify you in the fiery furnace: the day of the Lord shall burn as an oven, as the prophet speaks. This is a dreadful day, a day of vengeance, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, who redeems his people from their sins. Zion is redeemed with judgment, and established with righteousness. Do not make the way to heaven easier in your minds and imaginations than indeed it is; and think it not sufficient to live in an outward observance of the ways of God. If your own wills be alive, and your corruptions remain unmortified, the judgment of God will be your portion: therefore, in the Lord's name, come along with me; I am come to declare what I have heard and seen of the Father. Come and examine your conscience: have you brought your deeds to the light? Then you have received condemnation upon yourself, and your haughtiness is bowed down, and laid low, and you see yourself a poor miserable wretch, before the eternal God.

Whatsoever you know of the mind of God, have you reformed your ways? Come along with me, and tell me what is the ground of your faith and your confidence. Is it your obedience and qualifications? Because your obedience is right, and your qualifications right, what use do you make of them? Read the book of conscience: have you no ground for your faith? You have put on the reformed faith, and live an unreformed life: search and try yourself, man or woman. Do you watch over yourself, and keep in a sense of your dissolution, notwithstanding all your qualifications and partial reformation? Do you strive to enter in at the strait gate, and the narrow way? Here is the lost sheep you seek, the life of your will, the life of the first Adam. The justice of God will not allow you to make a savior of your duties and qualifications; and to take God's jewels and deck yourself with them; you cannot be saved without the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. What says your conscience, are you brought to this change of your mind and of your conduct? Are you all willing to part with your sins, with your pride and haughtiness? are you willing to part with your vile affections? This is the

work of God's grace upon you. Do you place your confidence in your duties and qualifications, and take God's jewels and ornaments and deck yourself with them? You took my jewels, says the Lord, and did play the harlot. If you return to the Lord, and humble yourself, and get through this difficulty, you will be happy forever. This judgment of God, this flaming sword that turns every way, will keep you from returning to sin, and bring you to Christ, and cut you off from all hope of salvation but by him, and make you to see the absolute need of a Savior, and that your life is hid with Christ in God.

It is God's infinite goodness to men, that he will hide pride from them, and humble them under his mighty hand. This is the condition of poor creatures who are slain by the hands of the Most High. How may I know when I am slain and baptized, and come to have sincerity? They that have this baptism, enter into the heavenly life; if you love the light of Christ Jesus, it will be thus with you. God will make short work in the earth. He will set your sins in order before you, and make you watchful unto prayer, and lead you to holiness of life and conduct, and make you abhor yourself, and despise all the pomps and pleasures and vanities of this world.

When he has adorned you with his graces, then watch, and in the light of Christ you shall see light, and that all you have done, and can do, is but your duty. All this you ought to do; you are God's creature, and all this will not justify you in order to your eternal salvation, for these services you owe unto God. If you diligently wait you shall see more light; then the sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ, who is called "the Word of God," will cut you off from all hopes of salvation from anything you have done, from any of your qualifications, from anything that you can do; so that you will be a hopeless soul, nothing in your own sense and apprehension. The power of the first Adam must die before him, and you will cry out, "I am a dead, lost, and undone creature: yet there is a life hid with Christ in God for me, but I can never have it, till I be slain into the will of God, and become as a little child, stripped of all my own excellency that I have attained. I must come to a sense of my own misery, and fall down at the foot of God. When I am become as a little child, humbled and slain as to my own will and confidence in my own righteousness, I will not then question but I shall live a holy life, but I will give all that life I had, for that life which is hid with Christ in God:" O! there are none come so far, that ever miss of eternal life.

All shuffling people, that would have salvation by Christ, and yet will not let him exercise his heavenly power, his princely, glorious power to baptize them into his death, come short of salvation: but all those who yield themselves up to Christ to be redeemed through judgment, and are become as little children, these are in a happy state. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ took a little child in his arms, and said, "Whosoever becomes not as a little child, cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." You must all become as little children, and depend upon the mercy and free grace of God; you must all come to a holy resignation of your wills to God's disposal. If you come to Christ as little children, and depend upon him, you cannot miss of salvation; it is entailed upon such souls as hear the voice of Christ, "they that hear the voice of the Son of God shall live."

I stand here as a witness for the God of heaven, I never heard the voice of Christ as his follower, until I was slain and baptized, and lay as a little child under his heavenly chastisement. As soon as ever my soul was brought to

this, O! then, the dreadful judgment was taken away, and the book of life was opened unto me, and the Lord spoke comfortably to me, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” I was made a Christian through a day of vengeance, and of burning as an oven; and the haughtiness and pride of man in me was brought low. Now in this conformity to Christ’s death, people may die into life, and blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. Away with all your own wills, and your pride, and haughtiness; and your hypocrisy and deceit, and all dependency upon any qualifications of your own: you must come to have your life separated from you, else you will all perish. To those that will die with Christ, and be willing to die for him, he is revealed as a Savior. He was before us in the days of his flesh, and complied with his Father’s will; he was nailed to the cross. The Son of God, when he was come to the depth of his sufferings, cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!” This was for your sake, and my sake, and every man’s and woman’s sake that do believe in him; he drank the cup which his Father gave him to drink. If it was done thus to the green tree, what shall be done unto the dry? He went before us, and when he comes again, he will take us to himself, and take us from the filth of sin, that we may be made new creatures.

Except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, and there is no becoming new creatures, until we be slain to the old man. You must be slain to your pride, and haughtiness, and the corruption of your own will, and all selfishness: you must have God to burn it up in you. The Holy Ghost will destroy, and burn up nothing in you, but that which will bring an eternal fire upon your soul.

“Show me, you whom my soul loves, where is the path of life, the footsteps of the flock of your companions? Why should I be as one that goes aside?” Every one that lives at home in the bosom of self, take this with you, though you profess the truth, and live in an outward conformity thereunto, yet if you secretly indulge your corrupt wills, and live a flesh-pleasing life, and consult with flesh and blood, and are not rent off from your lusts, you cannot enjoy the Lord of life: “while I am at home in the body, I am absent from the Lord.”

The body of sin is a loadstone to draw you from the life of God, and from glorying in the cross of Christ: this is flesh and blood, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. For the Lord’s sake, for your soul’s sake, and for the sake of your eternal happiness, put not off this work, but pursue it, and it will be perfected. See how Christ is revealed in you by the Holy Ghost, and with fire. God will redeem you by the spirit of judgment and burning: it is not ranging abroad in your minds [will do] but you must “know that Christ is in you except you be reprobates.” If he has set your eyes and hearts upon himself, and made you to water your couch with your tears; if he has broken your sleep, so as you have cried out, “I shall be damned, and never come to salvation;” this will be your cry, it was once my cry; O let not your eyes slumber, nor your eyelids take any rest, till you be sure the Lord is your God. If you find these qualifications, you are on your way, otherwise you will be like a deceitful bow, and never abide in judgment. If you reject the counsel of God against yourselves, and refuse to be crucified with Christ, and to be baptized with his baptism, you will never have life; but by his baptism, and through the heavenly operation of his Spirit, if you have faith in Christ’s name, you shall be married to him in everlasting righteousness. Salvation shall be brought to us, and eternal life be bestowed upon us; even that life which is hid with Christ in God he will give to every poor mournful soul that submits to his

blessed will, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not a faith of our own making, nor a garment of our own embroidery, but that which the Lord has given to us. O happy man or woman, that obtain this gift of God! O! who will not lose their lives for this everlasting life? Who will not die for this eternal life? Now, the matter lies in the death of your own wills: when you have done the will of God, then watch that your own wills be slain, and that cursed self take not the jewels of God, and his bracelets and ornaments, and bestow them upon self, and paint and deck cursed self: and take not the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot. If you be dead to your own wills, you are risen with Christ, and shall receive a resurrection to eternal life.

Crucify self, and set the world at naught, and trample upon it, and all the things of it, and count them as dross and dung in comparison of Christ, whom the Father has revealed to be our life, in the days of our sorrow and mourning, in the day of our calamity, in the day when we cried, "Our hope is lost!" Thus it has been with the holiest people on earth. It is not by works of righteousness of your own that you can be saved. Christ comes to cut all these down, that you may be ingrafted into him, and justified by his grace. Do not make this matter of talk, and say, I have heard this and that; but look into your own hearts, and see what heavenly workings are there; what there is of the power of the Lord Jesus, that has made you to loathe this world, and the inordinate love of the creature, that you may enjoy all these things as if you enjoyed them not. When we are slain and crucified to this world, we cannot but say, "My life is in Christ." Then we come to ascribe nothing to ourselves, and all to Christ. Here is a blessed harmony, broken hearts, melted spirits, and yet joyful souls; poor creatures, who were mourning, and sighing, and crying before the Lord in retired places, and yet rejoicing in Christ Jesus. "I am risen with Christ." I said, "My hope is cut off, I will lie down in your will, O God; do what you will with me, it is in your sovereign pleasure and free gift, whether you give me life or deny it to me."

There must be a resignation of ourselves to the will of God; it was so with the Lord Jesus and it is so with every true saint of God. You must be humbled as little children, before the judgment be taken away, and the lovingkindness of God sealed upon your souls. If you seek this work of God, you will find it; if you seek it upon your beds, in all your labors and concernments, in all your stations and relations; if you press after the new birth, you must use this world as though you used it not, and live a married life as if you were unmarried, for the fashion of this world passes away. This is not rantism.

But, let me tell you, a new world comes by regeneration. A man is not lifted up in his own mind, but laid low in his own eyes: he waits for the wisdom of God to govern him, and he is as a steward of the grace of God, to give to them that stand in need. When a man is regenerated and born again, he is as contented with bread and water, as with all the enjoyments of this world:—What is the matter? His own will is gone, and put under his feet with whatsoever gives life to his vain desires and affections. There is a harmony of all within, a man praising God, and blessing his holy name. No entanglements shall draw away the heart from serving God and seeking his glory; and if God shall call the husband from the wife, or the wife from the husband, for the glory of his name, there is no complaining and crying out, but giving them up and praising and blessing God, when

they are called to such an exercise. If they are not called to that, then they set their hearts to glorify God in their several places and stations; they have full content in a blessed resignation. Here their wills are slain, but they praise God they have no desire but, “Lord, your will be done!” always praising God, always having the fear and the glory of God before their eyes.

All the mischief is hatched in pleasing men’s own wills; this is the counsel of every heart that Christ does not govern. Will you live as the Quakers? Then you must live contemptibly, the mistress and the maid are “hail fellows well met.” Every one must walk in humility, and live in acquaintance with the God of heaven. She that is wrought upon by the same Spirit, must with all diligence behave herself as becomes a servant of the Lord. Here is now a new world, and the fashions of the old world are gone; pride, haughtiness, crossness, and trampling upon one another, are all gone, all slain through the operation of Christ.

What remains now,—Christ is in me, and we are all one in him. Christ laid down his life for you and me; now he reigns in me, and he has prepared my body to die for the truth, as his prepared body was laid down for my sin. It is a foolish profession, to make profession of Christ, and yet live in covetousness, profaneness, sensuality, and the like. They that are come to this heavenly birth, seek the things that are above—you can do no other: make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. You must be ingrafted into the vine of God’s righteousness: O slight not the day of your visitation. What was it to me to read of any being born again, until I was slain, and knew the heavenly baptism of Christ Jesus? Until I saw the flaming sword ready to slay me in every way, in every turning? The light of Christ convinced me of sin, and his righteousness justified me, and those works were abominable to me, which hindered my soul’s passage to Christ. Christ Jesus in marrying my soul to himself, did work effectually in me. There is the testimony of Christ in me, that he has sealed up my soul to the day of my redemption. Here is a certain passage, and a certain way which never any miss of, who lose their lives for Christ. If you be not ready and willing to lose your lives for Christ, you shall never come here: the gate is strait, and the way is narrow, none come here but those that die into a heavenly oneness with Christ. O Friends! let us empty ourselves, that Christ may fill us; let us be nothing in our own eyes, that we may be all in him, and receive of his fulness.

I commend you to God’s witness, that you may remember what has been spoken among you: but consider, if you do not hearken to it, it will follow you, and be a plague to you to all eternity. If you will not yield up yourselves to Christ, to this day that burns like an oven, this fire you must dwell with when out of the body, there will be no quenching of this fire forever. If you be so wise as to resign yourselves up to Christ, and come to him as little children, this will not hinder your earthly concerns. Though the world may account you a fool, yet you have that part of heavenly wisdom, to do what you do as unto God. You carry yourself to your wife, as in the sight of God, that she may be sanctified to you, and you to her; and you carry yourself becomingly to your children and servants, and you will abound in grace, and in every good work, which will be for your eternal welfare.

O, I beseech you, people, for the Lord’s sake, wait for the light of Christ to guide you: learn of him to be meek and lowly, then happy are you; for he dwells with the humble, but he beholds the proud afar off. This new birth,

which is a true work, a sincere and heavenly work will make you [happy] forever. O make room for Christ in your hearts, or else he is never likely to dwell with you; he loves to dwell with the poor and humble and contrite spirit, but abhors the proud; he will empty your souls, that he may fill them.

I commend you to God. I have been long held in durance under great weakness; and I was restless, until I could come up to this great city of London, to preach the everlasting Gospel among you. Pray, every one of you, turn inward; let not these words, passing through a mean vessel, be as a bare empty discourse of truth to you, which you only hear; and take no further care of your salvation. Take heed of despising the light that shines in the midst of you: press forward in the heavenly work, in the power of Christ Jesus, even through judgment into death, and then he will give you eternal life. The Lord confirm this, that it may rest upon your hearts, that you may be dead to the things of the world. We are not come to Mount Sinai, that genders to bondage, but “we are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

This is the inheritance of the redeemed of the Most High; blessed be the name of the Lord! Let us rest in hope, till he bring us to humility and lowliness of mind, that he may clothe us with heavenly glory, according to his promise, “I will beautify my house with glory,” says the Lord. This is the portion of a poor people, who cast themselves down before the Lord, that he may lift them up and be all in all to them, in whose blessed presence they shall have joy, and rivers of pleasures at his right hand forevermore!

[The following is the prayer, which he offered up after the preceding testimony.]

Blessed and glorious God! Your presence and power is with your people everywhere, and you are stretching forth your almighty arm, for the salvation of your chosen ones. You are influencing their souls with your grace and Spirit in their solemn assemblies. We desire to extol and magnify your great and excellent name for all your mercies and blessings. We pray you, bow down your heavenly ear, and hearken to the cries and supplications of your people, who are breathing forth the desire of their souls unto you. You are a God hearing prayers; supply their needs and establish their spirits, and uphold them with your free Spirit. Crown all your chosen ones with your lovingkindness and tender mercy; rend the cloud of darkness that hangs over us and take away the veil: bow the heavens, and visit us with your salvation, and reveal the mysteries of your Truth unto us, and in all our ways let us acknowledge you, and do you lead us in the way everlasting.

Righteous God of love! while we live on earth, let our citizenship be in heaven, where Christ our Mediator sits at your right hand; let us follow his example, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, that we may sit in heavenly places with him. Be a sun and shield to us in our earthly pilgrimage. Whom have we in heaven, but you; and there is none on earth that we desire besides you. Let us walk before you in sincerity and truth, and do you conduct us in the way of truth and righteousness, by your blessed Spirit. Blessed be your name for the light of your saving truth, that has shined in our minds; and the light of your countenance that has been lifted up

upon us in our meetings. You have furnished a table for your people as in the days of old: we cannot but admire your great love and condescension towards us, and extol and bless your holy name for your abounding mercies and the riches of your goodness to us. We desire to give you honor and renown, and praise and thanksgiving for your renewed mercies and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, for whom we bless you, and in whom we desire to be found, not having our own righteousness. To Him, with yourself, and your holy eternal Spirit, be glory forever. Amen!¹

Chapter XIX

1688. William Dewsbury is taken ill in London—Addresses a letter to the Yearly Meeting—Returns home—His last hours—Address previous to the close—His death and character—Testimony of his friends respecting him.

William Dewsbury continued in London until the 30th of the third month, desirous of attending the approaching Yearly Meeting; but having been taken ill soon after the meeting at which he had been so largely engaged, and his disorder continuing to increase, he addressed the following letter to his friends and then proceeded homewards.

Dear Friends and brethren,

I did not know until last night, but I should have been with you at the Yearly Meeting. But it pleased the Lord to visit me with my ancient distemper, which has accompanied me many years in prison, and since I was released.

¹ The Editor may be singular in the remark he is about to make, or carry his view of the subject beyond what others can follow him in, even among the religious Society of which he is a member. But he is not satisfied without observing, with regard to the practice of taking down sermons or prayers delivered in assemblies for divine worship, that, in his opinion, the thing is improper.

It may be pleaded, that such declarations are recorded in the New Testament; and also perhaps that ministers among Friends, have even thought it right to set forth in their journals or writings, some sketch of what they have had on particular occasions to communicate to the people. But in these cases, the analogy is not by any means complete; nor can these exceptions be safely held up as any precedent or rule.

The Editor apprehends he sees in the practice, a branch of that departure from primitive purity and simplicity, which very early enveloped the church in a veil of dimness and delusion. If Christian ministers and hearers, when met for divine worship, are to know Christ to be in the midst of them by his Spirit, their President and Leader, without whose fresh springs of help they can do nothing acceptably towards God or towards one another,—how can any be engaged in endeavouring to treasure up a stock of instruction against another time, or for other circumstances than those, under which they had been supplied according to the very hour of need? As soon as we leave the sure ground of the immediate extension of divine grace and favour to the mind, as furnishing the sole impulse and qualification for instrumental labour, the transition becomes very easy to recited sermons and forms of prayer. Indeed the Editor cannot doubt, but that some of those ancient and beautiful compositions, which form parts of the service of the *Book of Common Prayer*, were actually brought forth under a precious degree of divine influence; but the old enemy has contrived, by extolling these productions, to lead away the minds of people from that inwardly searching exercise, that individual labour, in which such words might have been rightly breathed forth, and to settle them down in the use of a form, by way of helping their infirmities, to the neglect of feeling after that strength which is “made perfect in weakness.”

The distemper was so sharp upon me last night, that I did not know whether I should live to see another day: but crying to the Lord, he ordered and cleared my way to go into the country, so I cannot be with you at the Yearly Meeting; but desire the Lord to assist you with his blessed power and heavenly Life, to bring in the scattered ones to their everlasting comfort, and his glory forever. Amen!

And that it may be so with you, is the prayer of your loving brother,

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

London, the 30th of the Third month, 1688

Although he was favored with strength to reach home, by short and easy journeys, he only lived seventeen days after the date of the above letter. About a week before he died, a few Friends being met in his chamber, rising from his bed in great weakness of body, he addressed them as follows:

My God has put it into my heart to bear a testimony in his name and blessed Truth. I can never forget the day of his great power and blessed appearance, when he first sent me to preach his everlasting Gospel, and to proclaim the day of the Lord to the people. And he confirmed the same by signs and wonders; and particularly by a lame woman who went on crutches, where I with my dear brethren, George Fox and Richard Farnsworth, were cast: and as I cried mightily unto the Lord in secret, that he would signally manifest himself at that time among us, and give witness of his power and presence with us, Richard Farnsworth, in the name of the Lord, took her by the hand, and George Fox after, spoke to her in the power of God, and bid her stand up, and she did, and immediately walked straight, having no need of crutches anymore. Therefore, Friends, be faithful, and trust in the Lord your God for this I can say, I never since played the coward; but joyfully entered prisons as palaces, telling my enemies to hold me there as long as they could. And in the prison house I sang praises to my God, and esteemed the bolts and locks put upon me as jewels; and in the name of the eternal God I always got the victory. For they could keep me no longer than the determined time of my God.

And, Friends, this I must once again testify to you in the name of the Lord God, that what I saw above thirty years ago still rests as a testimony to leave behind me: That a dreadful terrible day is at hand, and will certainly come to pass, but the time when, I cannot say. But all put on strength in the name of the Lord, and wait to feel his eternal power to preserve you through the tribulations of those days, that approach very near; in the sense of which I have often been distressed and bowed down in spirit, with cries and tears to my God, for the preservation of his heritage. And this I have further to signify, that my departure draws nigh; Blessed be my God! I am prepared; I have nothing to do but die, and put off this corrupt mortal tabernacle, this flesh that has so many infirmities. But the life that dwells in it ascends above all, out of the reach of death, hell, and the grave: and immortality and eternal life are my crown forever and ever! Therefore, you that are left behind, fear not, nor be discouraged, but go on in the name and power of the Lord, and bear a faithful and living testimony for him in your day. And the Lord will prosper his work in your hand, and cause his Truth to flourish and spread abroad. For it shall have the victory, and no weapon formed against it shall prosper. The Lord has determined,

it shall possess the gates of its enemies; and the glory and the light thereof shall shine more and more until the perfect day.

He concluded with prayers to the Lord, and with fervent breathings and supplications for all his people everywhere, but more especially, for his dearly beloved Friends, assembled at the Yearly Meeting in London; and departed this life about a week afterwards, namely, on the 17th of the fourth month, 1688, at Warwick, and was buried the following day.

If we turn from this last stage of William Dewsbury's pilgrimage, and from its triumphant close, to the earlier periods of his life, we cannot fail to arrive at the conclusion, that he was a man of no ordinary character. Those clear views of divine things, which attended his mind from first to last, from infancy to old age, and which he undoubtingly received as a heavenly gift, as the revelation of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ,—this inward sense, it was his undeviating concern to obey and follow. He truly received the Gospel neither of man, nor by man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The ardor and sincerity with which William Dewsbury sought after this divine understanding of divine subjects, these secret impressions and convictions of divine love visiting the mind and instructing it, were very great, it must be acknowledged, even for many years before his mind received full satisfaction as to his salvation and peace with God, and before he could be said to have arrived at an establishment in religion. His after-course was indeed like the conduct of the man who built his house upon the rock; the very gates of hell could not prevail against him. His mind was anchored, and everything that happened to him only served to confirm him in the way cast up before him. He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible, unchangeable;—he knew that his Redeemer lived, and felt Him to be near who justified him.

How truly may it be said of William Dewsbury, that he walked by faith and not by sight! even that faith by which “the elders obtained a good report,” and which was to him as to them, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” On what other principle, but the all-sufficiency of this divine faith,—faith in the presence and power of Christ inwardly revealed,—can we account for his deliberately entering upon that difficult and untrodden path, persevering through all obstacles in it, meekly and patiently enduring contradiction, triumphing over all difficulties, and becoming more than conqueror in the end?

Taking this view of William Dewsbury's character, formed as it was on the model of apostolic faith, there is no difficulty in accounting for any portion of his conduct, however irreconcilable it might appear on other grounds. Raised up by divine power for an especial service, in which he had many a “true yoke-fellow,” and having submitted to those deep baptisms indispensable in the great work of regeneration, by which his own nature was changed, his corrupt will subdued, the first Adam slain and the second Adam raised in him, a quickening spirit, to bear sway and rule in all things; William Dewsbury consulted not with flesh and blood, nor does it appear that he was at any period left in doubt as to the course it was right for him to pursue. Having once put his hand to the spiritual plough, he never again looked back. If it was

his, lot to suffer for the testimony of a good conscience, he never repined; but, following the example of the Great Pattern, “committed himself to him that judges righteously.” The afflictions and persecutions he underwent, neither shook his faith, nor wearied, nor offended him, because his foundation was on the rock: on this he stood. If he triumphed, it was as a servant who rejoices in his master’s service and work—“good will to men,”—and thus to increase his master’s glory: and self, through the power of redeeming love, having become of no reputation with him, he invariably yielded, for his success, the tribute of thanksgiving and praise to Him unto whom alone he felt that it did belong.

This our dear deceased brother [say his memorialists,] was a man religiously concerned for the honor of God, and had a great care upon his spirit, that those who had believed and made profession of the truth, might answer it in a holy and blameless life and conduct: which, he would often say, “could never be done by largeness of knowledge or strength of comprehension, but by a real dying to their wills and affections, by the virtue of the daily cross.”

He was one whom God raised up early in the morning of his glorious day, and made an eminent instrument in his hand for the publication of his mighty day and power; preaching repentance in order to the remission of sins, and bearing a faithful and universal testimony to the free grace of God to mankind. The Lord was with him, and prospered him in his manifold sufferings, travels, labors and exercises in the Gospel of Christ and word of his ministry. Many were made sensible of the benefit of his labors, to the good and welfare of their immortal souls. For the Lord our God, in whose dread and zeal he labored, endued him with faith and courage, and with great boldness for his name and truth; and he published the same in great plainness and in the simplicity thereof.

To the tender-hearted he was exceedingly tender; but to the stubborn and lofty he was sharp and plain; admonishing them, and declaring the righteous judgment of God against that state: waiting, and endeavoring with much patience and long-suffering, the recovery of such, who through the subtlety of the enemy had fallen from truth and from unity with the people of God; among whom he was sincerely devoted to maintain love and unity. But when any made it their work to cause division and discord, and to sow dissension among brethren, he would plainly testify against them and reject them; and, in the dread of the Lord’s power, thunder out God’s judgment against their deceit and wickedness:—as he did upon his last visit to London, a few days before his departure out of the body, which he then told some of us, was near at hand.

He was fervent and frequent in prayer to God for the good of his church, and for the gathering of people to their true rest; wherein we have had true unity with him. And our souls, with many more, have been often refreshed and comforted with him. His many deep sufferings for the truth, and his faithful travels and labors are never to be forgotten.

And although the envy of wicked and unreasonable men was very great and fierce against him, he feared neither their malice, threats, nor blows; but boldly went forth publishing the truth, by testifying to that of God in all consciences. And the hand of divine Providence did often deliver him in a wonderful manner out of the hands

of the wicked, for his name's sake.

Finally, having faithfully served his generation, and finished his sufferings, testimony and course with joy, he has now obtained the crown immortal, and is gone into the everlasting rest, from all his labors, and his works follow him, with a blessed reward in the kingdom of glory and peace.¹

Appendix

Letters of William Dewsbury

TO KING CHARLES THE SECOND

Oh, King!

Hear the word of the Lord God, which came unto me about the sixth hour in the morning of the 20th day of the third month, 1661. Thus says the Lord through his servant.

Oh! fear and dread the name of the eternal God, who has created and preserved you, by his mighty power, and saved you in the hollow of his hand, in the day of your great distress, when he corrected your family and all the nation, that they might walk humbly before him. And those who did humble themselves before him, his presence appeared with them; but when they departed from the lowliness of his spirit, and promised fair things, and did not perform in the uprightness of their hearts, according to their words, though they were never so invincible for strength, and clothed with the policy and wisdom of this world, the Lord has, and will break them down by the arm of his mighty power, and he catches them in their own craft, and overthrows them in their own devices, and not any can deliver themselves out of his mighty hand. He breaks them as the potsherds of the earth, and makes their names to rot and perish among men, and stink in the nostrils of the upright in heart. Thus he sets up, to try if man will give him the glory of his works; and when he kicks against his Maker, he breaks him down in his wrath, and overthrows him in his fierce displeasure. And this is the work of the mighty God, who has preserved you in safety, while destruction and calamity were on every side; that now you have seen a cloud of witnesses before your eyes.

You are set on the throne, wherein he is trying and proving you, that you may, by what you have

¹ The preceding paragraphs form the greater part of a testimony borne to his memory soon after his death, to which are attached the names of six Friends, namely, George Whitehead, Francis Camfield, Richard Pinder, Stephen Crisp, Richard Richardson, and James Parke.

seen, dread his name, and wait in his counsel, the light of his spirit, which is his law in your heart and conscience, that lets you see you are but dust. And if you watch unto it, and wait upon him in it, you will see the secret evil of your heart. If you look up to him in the light of his spirit, and in the uprightness of your heart judge the evil in you, and in it wait on him to be guided in true lowliness and humility of spirit, to seek alone his glory, and nothing for yourself, but wait upon him to be an instrument in his hand, that he may govern and order you in all his ways; then will he enlighten your understanding, and seal unto you his secret counsel, and give you to see through all that profess his name and know him not, and what his true worship is. And he will let you see what is idolatry, and what is the worship in which his presence shall accompany all who are found faithful therein, and which he will defend with his power against all opposers.

None shall prosper who devise mischief against them that are faithful to him in this his worship; this is declared to you to be pure obedience to his spirit, which cleanses the heart and purifies the conscience. And this is his worship he has determined in his unchangeable and heavenly decree to establish in the earth, and over all nations it shall stand. He shall scatter all as dust, who seek to oppress his people, and resist the rising of his glory, and you shall certainly know the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken it.

And if you turn your mind within, to his counsel in you, and in diligent watchfulness incline your ear to his pure spirit, that calls for righteousness in your heart and conscience, and be obedient with boldness to walk in the strait way of the daily cross, and deny the evil, and answer his requirings, which he makes known to you; then will he guard you with the power of his heavenly and dreadful presence, and will make you a terror to evil doers, that a liar or an unclean person shall not be found in your house, nor any worker of iniquity shall be able to stand before you; he will clothe you with wisdom, and you shall be able to judge all causes that are brought before you in righteousness. Then will you put away all sports, plays, pastimes, drunkenness, uncleanness, and whatever grieves his spirit, out of your sight, and cleanse the land of it, through your faithful walking with God, who has made you a son of affliction from your youth, that you might learn to fear his name. If you do these things he will make you a terror to all nations round about, that devise mischief against you; the angel of his presence will pitch his tent about you, you standing in his counsel, and giving liberty to his sons and daughters, as he moves them by his spirit, to walk in his service.

The mighty God requires of you, that you do not lay a bond upon the spirits of his people in matters of worship, to force all to uniformity. You have seen before your eyes, that the kings and princes of this world, who have sought so to do, have brought much innocent blood upon them, who have been seeking by their outward power to establish Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Thus have his people been slain from day to day, in the nations that have been building Babel, in whom is found the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and all that are slain upon the earth; for whose sake he is now risen, to plead the cause of those that fear him, and walk humbly before him.

And this he requires of you, in all things to mind his law in your heart, to do unto others as you would be done unto, if you were in their places and they in yours; and let mercy be found in your hands to all people, as you have found mercy at the hands of the Lord, yes to your enemies; and, in what you may, live in peace with all men. And in all your undertakings seek not yourself; let the glory of God be the object of your mind, and wait to feel his hand leading you in what you do. If you stand in his counsel, to do as he requires of you, to mind your place and to keep the people in peace, and punish sin and wickedness, and give free liberty for the Lord, by his spirit to rule in the consciences of his people, as he orders them to meet in his fear, and witness forth his mind where he leads them, without restraint; and no more to be given like lambs to the slaughter, and driven to prison like sheep to the fold, but to have free liberty in their peaceable lives to serve their God;—then will he raise his name in your father's house, and make you a nursing father unto his people, and you shall partake of the blessings with them that fear him, and all the world shall be amazed to hear of his dreadful appearance for his people that obey his spirit in this nation, which shall convince both Jew and Gentile, that the mighty God is risen to manifest his power to them that fear him in these northern countries. And the day is very near, wherein it shall be no more said, “The Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord lives that brought up and led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country.”

Oh king! let his goodness constrain you, and all your family, to humble yourselves before him. What could he have done for you more than he has done? Has he not been your relief in your greatest straits? Let his goodness engage you to answer what he requires of you; then will he make you one of the number of his elect and chosen, and your days will be full of gladness, and your soul shall live forever in the kingdom of glory with all the redeemed who are led by his spirit. But, if you reject his counsel, his law in your heart, and will not regard his spirit in your inward parts, but hearken to the counsel of your own heart, and the wit and policy of the spirit of this world, and so set up yourself on high, and rob God of his glory;—and give up his people, as they have been, to be pulled out of their peaceable meetings, and haled to and fro, as sheep that are slaying all the day long, in tumults, distresses, afflictions, stonings, stripes, prisons, and death;—and set up proud covetous men, who know not God, to be teachers in the land, which draw people into idolatry, worshipping they know not what; so, the blind leading the blind, they both fall into great wickedness, which grieves the spirit of God, and liberty is given to plays, sports, and pastimes, which draw people into drunkenness, uncleanness, and great abomination.

If these things be not reformed by you, but allowed to go on as they have been;—this will be your portion:—as he has multiplied on you his mercies to the astonishment of the people and nations round about, so will he stretch out the arm of his power against you, and get himself the glory, in his mighty judgments which shall be revealed in the great and terrible day of his fierce wrath, wherein he will cleanse the land of all that rob him of his glory, and reject his counsel, the light of his spirit in their consciences. You shall certainly know the mouth of the Lord has spoken it through his servant, who, in faithfulness to your soul, oh king! has not hid the counsel of God from you, but greatly desires your eternal welfare,

and in patience waits that righteousness may be established in the earth, who is known by name, William Dewsbury, prisoner at the date hereof in the common jail at York, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

P. S. Before this could be sent unto you with a private and safe hand, I was set at liberty, with some other of my brethren, by your late proclamation, which we own as an act of justice. Now, if you let bonds be no more laid upon the consciences of the people of God, but that, as before written, they may serve their God in the liberty of his spirit, you will then find a hiding-place in this terrible day of vengeance, which will be manifest in England, to the astonishment of all the world. For there is no man that lives contrary to God but shall roar under the heavy judgments of the wrath of the Lamb of God, whom the Father will reveal in flames, rendering vengeance upon all that know him not, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For God will make England as the garden of Eden, and wickedness shall not reign therein; then shall it be a blessing; to ail nations; and you shall know assuredly, that he is faithful and true who has revealed these things to his servant, that desires your everlasting felicity and happiness in your obedience to Christ Jesus, the Light who enlightens every man that comes into the world; and now is the Father revealing him, to judge every one according to the deeds done in the body.

—W. D.

A general Epistle given forth from the Spirit of the Lord, to be read in his fear in the assemblies of Friends, gathered in these northern countries, and in all countries and islands wherever the people of the Lord are scattered over the face of the earth.

Dear Friends,

Called in the light of the Lord to stand living witnesses for him upon the earth among the children of men: oh! the love of the Lord which is in my heart to you, that when I was nigh unto death, to the sight of all who saw me, as to the outward man, and scarcely able to speak, I was constrained to give forth the substance of what is now sent among you, for a perfect discovery of your conditions. Seeing that many are called but few chosen, and many convinced who are not converted; therefore are these lines written, that you may truly know whether you be born again, and redeemed from the earth, yes or no.

And in order thereunto, let every man and woman search their hearts with the light of the Lord, and it will truly manifest whether you be born again, and so feed upon the tree of life, or whether you rest in outward formal conformity to the Truth, having the heart in the earth, for that spirit will turn against Truth, as it has done. Some others are drawn to delight their hearts in the gifts, parts, and knowledge, which the Lord has given them, more than in the Lord, the fountain from which they come; and so abuse

the gift, and feed upon the fruit of the tree of knowledge which puffs up, and makes man wise in his own eyes, and to say in his heart,—“I am wise and rich, and see, and lack nothing,” when they are blind, miserable, naked, and lack all things. Whatever any profess, as to the service of God, who are in this condition, they have an end to themselves in what they do, which grieves the Spirit of the Lord. When men and women in a discursive spirit take upon them to declare the Truth, when the Lord neither calls them nor speaks by them, the children born of the royal seed are burdened; for such have turned against the Truth, and the children born of it, whom the Lord will ease in the day determined, when all mouths shall be closed in silence, but those which are opened by him, and not any voice be heard, but his own Spirit speaking in and through his own children, born of him, who alone seek his glory, and not anything for themselves, which must be denied.

Therefore, seeing the enemy’s wiles are great and many, let all dread the Lord; and those who have been led astray, wait in the heart-searching light, to see where the mystery of iniquity led them forth, and return to the light, to judge down proud exalted self which has turned against the Truth, and to bring into true poverty and abhorring of self; waiting at the throne of grace, for the Lord to raise you up in the resurrection which raised up Jesus from the dead. In this life, contentious self is buried in death, and the true unity is known, where the Lord alone is exalted in purity, joy, love, and peace in all his, from the least to the highest growth, and all flesh is abased before him, who is worthy of all obedience, praise, and glory forever, Amen.

And all dear Friends and brethren, love the light, and rejoice in the judgments of the Lord, to have subtle self buried in death, that whatsoever gifts of the Spirit, the Lord gives unto you, if the enemy tempts you ever so strongly to puff you up in a self-priding spirit, in what you have received of the Lord; yet his fear may be minded by you, which keeps you in a true sense of your nothingness and emptiness in yourselves, which causes you to wait in true self-denial, for the daily assistance, and renewal of your strength in the resurrection of life in the Lord Jesus; and the more he manifests his power with you, the more empty and nothing you appear in your own eyes. Thus is the true birth known, which makes self of no reputation, that the Lord may be exalted in his unlimited power, in manifesting himself in the poverty, emptiness, and nothingness of his people who are born of him, that no flesh may glory before him; but that all in truth say,—“The Lord does all in me, and through me, and the Lord shall have the glory. I will sit in the dust at his feet to serve him and his people, in what I may, while I have a being among the sons of men, through whom we are raised up to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, to the glory of his name forever.” This is the state of the true disciples of Christ who cannot feed on the fruit of the tree of knowledge: although in your journey and travels, you see the tree of knowledge to be good, where it stands in its place, yet the fruit is not good to eat and feed upon, because knowledge puffs up, but grace makes humble.

Therefore, dear brethren and sisters, who cannot live in any enjoyment, but as you enjoy the life and presence of God, from whom every good and perfect gift comes; although some of you be, in your own eyes, the meanest among the people of the Lord; yes, sometimes your trials are so great, that you are

ready to account yourselves unworthy to be numbered among the people of the Lord, and yet you dare not disobey him, neither can you live without his presence;—O, dear children of God! lift up your heads over all temptations and accusations of the enemy; for your groans and cries are entered into the ears of the Lord, who in his love and mercies does constrain me to proclaim his tender compassion to all who are truly poor in your spirits. O! blessed are you among the children of men, for yours is the kingdom of God. Therefore be not weary of waiting upon the Lord, for in his own time he will turn your sorrows into joy, and give to you the spirit of praises for the spirit of heaviness, as he has done to many who have endured the like temptations, trials, and sufferings, under which you wait this day for deliverance; and the Lord will be the same to you. Be of good comfort; for as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so is the Son of Man lifted up in the light and covenant of life, to heal your wounds, and save you from sin, and to give you victory over the enemy in all his appearances. Through faith in the name of Christ, making war in righteousness, and fighting the good fight in keeping the faith, you will be made more than conquerors through his love shed abroad in your hearts, which will cause you to speak of his goodness, and praise his name for all his mercies.

And all dear children of the Lord, who witness in measure that you are truly baptized into his death, and so are made partakers of his resurrection which is the life, who worship him according to his own will, and so are truly accepted of him,—watch and pray, that you may be guided in the power of his spirit in all your ways. Be careful that none be hasty to utter words before the Lord, neither allow any sighs or groans, or anything to be heard to pass through you, but as you have the seal of the spirit of the Lord, that he requires it of you. This I am commanded to lay as a charge upon you, that so all flesh may be truly silent before the Lord, and no voice be heard, but the living spirit of the Lord speaking in his people, which, you that wait in the fear of the Lord, and mind his leadings, may truly know. As it is written, so do his children witness,—“He that has my word,” says the Lord, “let him speak my word faithfully; is not my word like a fire and a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Therefore, all mind to feel the word of the Lord speaking in you, that the pure life of the spirit may be tasted and felt, in whatsoever you be exercised, that so you may be fully assured it is not your own work, as man speaking of God, but the Lord alone uttering his own voice in the power of his own spirit, in what you are exercised in, whether it be to pray in sighs, or groans, or in words, or to speak in exhortation or praises. You are not to quench the spirit of the Lord in this his day, in which he is come and does appear, giving various gifts unto his people, as he did among his disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the pouring forth of his spirit from on high. But they that were strangers to the work of the spirit, could not taste the life that spoke in them, but said, they were mad, and full of new wine, etc.; but the Lord justified them, it being the work of his own spirit; and although he gave unto them various gifts, yet all in the unity of himself, in which they sacrificed, in returning to the Lord his own with advantage, to the glory of his great name, as his children do this day.

Blessed be his name forever, that out of the mouths of babes his praise is declared, in their measures,

as it is with those of higher growth in the Lord. Thus the faithful laborers reap the fruit for which they travail, that all the people of the Lord may be filled with his spirit, and in the exercise and leadings thereof, become a body of living ministers, and a family of prophets; the strong leading the weak by the hand, and in tender love building up one another in their most holy faith, which gives the victory over the world, to reign in the heavenly dominion. This causes the children of the Most High, in the authority of the Lord, to say to the greatest persecutors,—“O man! do what you have power to do, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of your hand; but if he will not, we are resolved in his strength to allow what he permits man to do.” This is the holy resolution of all that are born again, and cannot hide your heads in the time of persecution, because you are born of the royal seed, and have overcome the beggarly, cowardly, earthly spirit, through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of your testimony, and no more love your lives unto death.

And all dear chosen vessels of the Lord, seeing he has manifested his grace so largely to you, be obedient with all diligence in walking answerably to his love and mercy received; that as living witnesses for God, you may shine forth in the beauty of holiness in all your ways. And be careful in keeping your meetings at the time appointed, every one endeavoring to be the first at the meeting, that none give way to a careless spirit, as some have done, and come to meetings when others have been a considerable time together, and so become a burden to the diligent and obedient servants of the Lord. Thus, the meetings are not so profitable to your comfort, as when you meet diligently at the time, waiting in the fear of the Lord to feel his sweet presence, which will keep you awake in the life of his own spirit, to the glory of his name, and the comfort of one another, which will cause you to prize the opportunities God gives to you, not knowing how soon you may be deprived of them. And be tender one over another, and watch over one another with a pure single eye, and every one see the beam cast out of your own eye, before you go to spy a mote in others. If any brother or sister offend, you that know, speak to them privately, in all tenderness, to restore them; and this know, “whoever turns a sinner from the error of his ways, saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins.” But if they will not hear, take two or three more, and speak to them again in the spirit of meekness, waiting, and seeking the Lord for their recovery; but if they will not hear, but persist in wickedness, then acquaint the church, whom the Lord in his wisdom will order to deal with them for his own glory.

And in all things you do, I beseech you, do unto others, as you would be done unto yourselves, that so you may all in your measures, stand as saviors upon mount Zion, to the glory of the Lord, in the power of his own spirit, which will cause the whisperer, backbiter, false accuser, and tale-bearer to be driven away, and cast out of the house of the Lord. Thus, in the good order of the holy Spirit of our God, we may all live; that he alone in his dominion may reign in us, and among us, whose government is upon his shoulders, and all the crowns of the glory of man cast down at his feet, that he may be exalted in ordering every member of the body in their place and service, to his everlasting praise and glory.—Even so, dear Father! carry on your work in all the churches of the saints, scattered over the face of the earth, that in the unity they may be established in the Lord, being one, and his name one, and all the contrary swept

away with the breath of your mouth, and brightness of your coming:—so come, Lord Jesus! Take to you your great power, and reign in your authority in and among your dear children, to the astonishment of the nations, and all people that are not born again, and to the exaltation of your own name and kingdom over all, who are worthy to reign, blessed forever, and of whose dominion there is no end!

And all you faithful laborers in the Gospel of Christ, who in true innocency travail in his strength, and seek not anything for yourselves in what you do, but to glorify the Lord in establishing his people in the living unity in his own spirit:—O! blessed are you among the people; my soul praises the Lord for you, and blesses his name, that ever he raised up such a spirit in you; that in all the riches of the spirit, God gives to you, yet you remain truly poor in yourselves, and in deep humility become servants to his people for the Lord's sake; and being poor, you make many rich in that which will abide fresh and green in the winter storms, and will not fade away in the terrible blasts which will come for the trial of his people, and cause all hearts to fail, but what are born of his own nature. Oh! dearly beloved brethren, feel my enlarged love, which flows to you in the life received and enjoyed through death, where there is no variableness nor shadow of change.

I remain your brother, in the word of his patience, to endure the suffering, according to his determination, with all that love the Lord better than their lives.

—W. D.

Warwick Jail, 14th of Tenth month, 1668.

WILLIAM DEWSBURY TO FRIENDS

Dear Friends,

In the light of Christ wait upon him, to renew you in the spirit of your minds to serve the living God. My dear Friends, mind your calling, unto which you are called, to wait in the light, to retain God in your knowledge, to feel the work of regeneration perfected in you; that you may truly learn to take up the cross daily, and to feel the heavenly power manifest itself, to raise you up in the life that makes self of no reputation, and dries up the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and brings all flesh to true silence in you before the Lord. Then will not any be hasty to utter words before him, but all in true watchfulness and prayer wait for the heavenly inspiration of his holy Spirit, to overcome your spirits, and to sanctify you, in making you obedient to the heavenly government of Christ Jesus in you.

He will lead you out of your own thoughts and wills, in a humble subjection to his blessed will, which will order you in all faithfulness, to walk with God in your families, to be good examples by your good conduct; that so you may have a testimony in the consciences of your children and servants, and all with whom you have to do, in having all your words and works seasoned with the good savor of the spirit of the Lord; that he may give you an assurance that the church of God is in every particular family, and that you

are his dwelling-place among the children of men. Then will the angels of his presence pitch their tents about you, in the day when this Scripture shall be fulfilled, as it is written, “Pour forth your vengeance, O Lord! upon the heathen that know you not, and upon all the families that call not upon your name.”

Dear Friends, be watchful in prayer always, that you may enjoy the heavenly life, to exercise you in all faithfulness; strive to exceed in humility and carefulness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ meet together, that he may exercise, guide, and order you in all services for the blessed truth of our God; that, in the meek spiritual life and love, you be subject to serve the Lord, and one another in all tenderness of heart, in doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Then will the Lord take delight in you, and make you manifest to be his chosen jewels and saviors upon Mount Zion, in repairing the breaches, and restoring the desolate, and in love bringing back again those that have been driven away, or turned aside, either to the right hand or to the left, in the hour of temptation and days of trial.

O, you meek, humble-spirited people of the Almighty God! lift up your heads, and keep your minds stayed upon the Lord, to help you to keep your habitations of peace within the gates of Zion, where we have salvation for walls and bulwarks; whose confidence is in the Lord alone. In him, I beseech you, live in the endeared love of Christ Jesus, who gave his life to redeem us to himself, and gives strength to his redeemed ones to forsake wife and children, to give up our lives daily, in tumults, stripes, bloodshed, with cruel sufferings, both in prison, and when at liberty, to bring enemies out of enmity, in the light to be in union with God. Oh! be entreated to seek the Lord, to subject all your minds to the love of God in Christ Jesus, to rule in you; then will the desire of my soul be answered, in your restoring and gathering to God, as is before written, who will then build you up in the unity of the spirit and bond of peace, which will enable you with patience and meekness, to weary out and overcome whatever is contrary to his pure, peaceable and blessed nature:—the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, through your brother and companion in the kingdom of patience and tribulation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

—W. D.

Warwick jail, the 10th of the Twelfth month, 1680

A general epistle to be read in the fear of God, in and among the assemblies of his people.

My dear Friends,

In the light of the Lord, all watch and pray, that you may receive power through faith in the name of Christ to reign over your own thoughts and wills. Then will you delight in taking up the daily cross and mortifying the earthly members, that your conduct may be as becomes the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This will make you manifest to the witness of God in every conscience, that you are the salt of the earth, that have kept your state and habitation in God, and retain the sweet savory spirit of life,

which seasons all your words and works, and ministers grace to all with whom you have any concern, to the exalting of God's blessed truth over all that watch for evil, which will cause their eyes to fail, and frustrate their expectations forever. Amen.

And, dear Friends, I beseech you, be faithful upon all accounts for the service of the blessed truth of God, to meet together in his holy fear; that you may receive the holy inspiration of his spirit, to exercise you in what service God is pleased to call you unto, whether in prayer to God, or in exhortation to build up one another in your most holy faith; to raise up the life in all, that every one who is overcome with the powerful and heavenly motions, cast their mite into God's treasury, and give him his own. Thus will you feel the increase of his government in you that are faithful, in the true measure of light and life; and more and more he will give unto you, to the edifying of one another in love. You will become epistles written in one another's hearts, with the pure spirit of the living God, which will bind you up in the unity of the spirit and bond of peace; and what exercise soever is met with, while you are in the mortal body, pray to the Lord to keep you in the life of his own spirit, that patience may have its perfect work; that if you be smitten on the one cheek, turn the other cheek to the smiter also; and if you be reviled, revile not again, but in deep humility and patience, wait in the pure, meek, peaceable spirit of our Lord Jesus, who was made perfect through sufferings;—so are his dear and chosen jewels, who bear his name in righteousness, and have their eye to the God of their help, and their confidence is in the Lord alone.

O you blessed of the Lord! be glad in his name, who will not let any whose confidence is in him alone, allow more than he will give strength to bear, and will sweeten the cup of your tribulation with his blessed presence, which will cause your hearts to rejoice, and sing in all your trials; and will give you your portion forever with the blessed assembly, that John spoke of in the 7th of the Revelations—a number that no man could number, that had passed through the great tribulation, and washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his holy temple;—and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them, and feed them, and lead them to the living fountains of waters, where God shall wipe away all tears of sorrow from their eyes, forever. This is your portion, dear children of the living God, who in true love to him, have waited upon him in the light of Christ, to be buried with him in his spiritual baptism and made conformable to him in his sufferings and death—and in the deep sense of your present strait, being made conformable in measure to our Lord and Savior, you cry as he did upon the cross, when he bore the sins and transgressions of his people, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Even so do you his dear children, in your measure, passing through the great tribulations, being made of the number of the slain of the Lord.

Here is first a passing through the great tribulation, to be made of the number of the slain of the Lord; and, being truly humbled into his blessed will, in a deep sense of poverty of spirit,—there, wait upon the Lord, until he create you to a lively hope, and give you a possession of his blessed life, that is hid with Christ in God, and so marry you to himself in his own righteousness, which he gives you for your wedding-garment. The love of God constrains you to walk in all strict observations that are required of

you to be done; but no more to lean upon them for life, but have all your obedience accepted of God through faith in the light, life, and name of Christ, in whom you now are the righteousness of God forever, in giving up freely to be guided by his spirit in faithfulness to the end.

O! ever blessed and happy people, who do witness fulfilled in you what is here written; lift up your heads and rejoice in the Lord, and in his humble, meek, and pure spirit, which makes self of no reputation; but through your obedience to Christ Jesus the true Light, in whom you come to witness the Lord to be one, and his name one—and you that never had power to believe in his name, until he gave you power to believe;—you are one in the Lord forever. And here is the joyful unity with the Father in the Son, and one with another in the love of Christ, who bought us with his blood, which the gates of hell can never prevail against.

And all you, my ancient brethren and sisters, who have obtained this blessed dominion and everlasting inheritance,—I bless God for you, who I do believe will take care to answer the desire of my soul, for the comfort of the young and tender babes; for whose sake I had this concern upon my spirit, to lay before them the true passage into the footsteps, where the tribulated companions have traveled that are married to the Lord of life, and have upon them their wedding-garment, that they may not come short who are upon their travel towards the same inheritance in Christ the true light. I dearly beseech you, whom God has sealed up with his holy Spirit, to your full assurance of God's everlasting love in Christ Jesus, that you watch over the tender and tribulated ones, and in what can possibly be done, strengthen their faith; that they may come into the heavenly unity with the Father in the Son, and sit down with all them who have been made conformable to Christ in his sufferings and death; and that, in the heavenly resurrection, blessed and everlasting peace, they may sing hallelujah and high praises to the Lord their God,—over all the wrath that is in the children of men, which will come to an end, and vanish away like smoke, before you whom the Lord has called, in meekness, and patience, to bear his name in righteousness, in the sweet savory spirit of Jesus Christ, over all, blessed forever, Amen.—In which, the Lord keep you all, with my soul, faithful unto the end, is the breathing of the spirit of your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And further, I have this to communicate to my friends and brethren: that what has come to pass these late years, has been for lack of watchfulness to be guided by the spirit of the Lord. Love has been quenched in many, in whom offenses have entered, and separation followed; which has deeply wounded my spirit, having endeavored, to the utmost of my power in the love of God, to prevent such proceedings; and so have I done in many years past, by preventing papers ready to be printed, from being published, that were of a tendency to quench the love of one towards another. And when Jeffery Bullock's papers were published in print, which would appear to the reader of a tendency leading to the breach of unity, which would cause the enemies of God to rejoice; it did so wound my spirit, that for many weeks those who saw me did not expect that I should continue long in the body; but God in his mercy restored strength in his appointed time.

And when I heard, that some in the west intended to publish in print against some Friends, I bore my testimony against such proceedings, and told one who favored what was intended, that I would have my hand cut off before I would exercise it in such undertakings; and desired him to speak to W. R. [William Rogers,] that he would not proceed in publishing anything of that nature; for if he did, it would be a prejudice to truth, and would produce very sad consequences, and my spirit would be deeply wounded, as it is this day, through these proceedings, of those who voluntarily, through lack of love, cast away the judgment that is given to the saints to keep all sweet and savory among us, into the hands of the enemies of God, as an inlet for them to come into the midst of us, to sit as judges and trample upon us.

So this is written to clear my conscience of all false reports cast upon me, as that I have encouraged what is brought forth of this kind, and to satisfy all Friends, that I have labored according to the ability God has given me, to prevent the publishing all things of that nature, as aforesaid. And I have admonished all concerned that I could meet with, to have a care of watching for evil, lest they provoke one another to wrath, and so quench love; but rather to look at the good in one another, and, in the love of God, labor to preserve them out of any weakness which they saw lay near to attend them; that so the pure, holy Spirit of life and love, which first gathered us into itself, to be a people in God, and in his authority to reign over what is contrary to his blessed nature, may again restore, where it is lacking, in the universality of its blessed power,—making up the breaches, and restoring the desolate ones, and causing every one that professes the blessed truth of God, to love their neighbor as themselves; and so to do unto all, as they would have others to do unto them. Thus, all concerned in this exercise, who seek the peace of his people in the measure of the grace of God in Christ, may stand as saviors upon Mount Zion, to the honor of the name of the Lord our God, and the comfort of all who love not their lives unto death, serving the Lord, and his dear and chosen people, in the meek, patient, and peaceable spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In which, the Lord keep you all with my soul; that, in his pure and peaceable dominion, we all may throw down our crowns before his throne, and unanimously sing,—All glory, honor, praises, thanksgiving, and dominion be given to him, who is found worthy to sit upon his throne in all our consciences, Christ Jesus, the true light, and hope of our glory! even so be it, with all that profess his blessed truth, says my soul in the name of the Lord.

—W. D.

From Warwick, the 8th day of the Third month, 1683

WILLIAM DEWSBURY TO FRIENDS IN BRISTOL

My dear, faithful, suffering brethren and sisters in Bristol, Gloucester, and elsewhere, for the word of God, and testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ: Oh, lift up your heads, you whose days are prolonged to see this blessed day which was sounded in your ears above twenty years by-past, and are counted worthy to receive this crown of his suffering spirit. All you that freely resign to suffer for his

name in true sincerity, shall reign forever with him in eternal glory. Therefore, in the name of the Lord, I beseech you all, convinced of God's blessed truth, not to lend your ear to any counsel in you, or without you, that would cause you to fly sufferings, and so deny the suffering Jesus before men; for if you do, you know it is written, that he will deny you before his heavenly Father, etc. But all you who so love the Lord, that you dare not but do as godly Daniel did, walk with your God as at other times, with the hazard of both estate, liberty, and life—oh! blessed be the day that ever the Lord crowned you with this frame of spirit in receiving Jesus to be your guide. Even so, the Lord keep you, and lead you to the living fountain of water, which in the light is opened in you. Give not way to your own thoughts, but in the light judge them down as fast as they appear; then will you be kept out of the straitness of your own bowels, in heavenly enlargedness in the will of God, whose thoughts are good and not evil, to give you all an expected end, in answering the desires he has raised up in you, to do his will.

Therefore arise in the pure, peaceable spirit of the Lord;—cast your care upon him; he will arm you with patience to endure the tribulation, which will cause the beholders to admire, as it is written in the Scriptures of truth:—behold the patience and faith of the saints, which will overcome all that withstands the rising of his glory, who is the God of our help, over all blessed forever—here is the rest of your tribulated brother in the kingdom and patience of Christ Jesus.

—W. D.

Warwick, 17th of the Fifth month, 1682

WILLIAM DEWSBURY TO EDWARD NIGHTINGALE OF YORK

My ancient Friend!

Whom the Lord, counted worthy to receive his blessed truth, with many in that city and county, when he sent forth his servants, and called me to forsake wife and children, and to give up my life daily unto his will, to endure stripes and bruises in many tumults, with the rest of my faithful brethren, who loved not our lives to death for your sakes, to gather you and all that received the truth, that you might enjoy the presence of the Lord. And among many others, we counted you worthy to receive his servants, who meet together in the heavenly unity in the truth; for which, both you and I, with many of the servants of God, were put into prison, as many of his servants are this day. And the blessed presence of God kept, and does keep, them that truly fear his name in sweet unity and peace in himself and one with another, to their everlasting comfort, and to the confounding the enemies of God, who beheld their steadfast standing, and entire union in bearing their faithful testimony in whatever they were called unto for the truth of God. This did not only confound God's enemies, but many were convinced and received the truth in the love of it, beholding the unity of faithful Friends, to their comfort, and the honor of the name of the Lord; which caused my soul, with the rest of the faithful laborers, to praise the name of the Lord, in having blessed the travail of our souls, and given us to see the fruit of our labor in his vineyard, and the

peace and unity of his people.

But, of late I have heard that you, my ancient friend, Edward Nightingale and John Cox, with some others in that city, do meet together in a separating spirit apart from the rest of Friends in the city, which casts a stumbling-block in the way of many. And, instead of gathering people to receive the truth, you scatter and drive them away; and it gives great advantage to them that watch for evil, and is of a bad savor, and wounding to the spirits of them that truly fear the Lord. I can truly say, your meeting in that separating spirit, which is such an evil savor in the nation, has been, and is more afflicting to me than all the persecutions and imprisonments I have endured unto this day.

Therefore, I entreat and beseech you, my ancient friend, Edward Nightingale, with all that meet in the separation from the rest of Friends in the city, to turn your minds to the light of Christ in you, which will let you see you have not done well, and with it judge that which has led you to separate from Friends; and return to meet with them in the city, in the sweet concord, love, and unity in the life of the blessed truth, as in the days of old and years past. I am a witness with the rest of faithful Friends, that in all our meetings, whether in the prison or in the city, we never lacked the sweet appearance of Christ, our life, in us and among us, according to his promise and to our comfort. And so it is now, with all that meet in his name, and in unity with his people, as we did in those days.

It was many years before the enemy could get any entrance to make a breach among those that profess God's blessed truth, to draw some into a self-separation, as he has done you and too many more elsewhere. I do assure you, it is the work of the enemy of your souls. You should not have separated, but have kept your places among Friends; and not have taken offense because they saw there might be some service for truth in meeting twice on the first-day of the week. It is very likely, that some in that city who had a love to truth, might get an opportunity to come to one of those meetings. It is very much to me, how you let the enemy so get over you, as to cause you to separate from Friends; whereas had you kept your places in meeting with them, you in time might have seen a service in meeting twice a day as well as they. You may be sure that separation neither restores any to the love of truth, nor gathers any to God, but rather scatters and drives away some that were gathered in love to truth by the painful and faithful laborers who were sent of the Lord. Therefore, in the yearnings of the love of God to you, I once more beseech you, that in humiliation you wait in the light of Christ, and he will let you see how the enemy led you out of your places, when you separated from meeting with Friends; and in yielding obedience to the light, it will bring you into your places again, to meet with Friends to your comfort, and the honor of the name of the Lord, according to the counsel of the Lord in my heart, here sent unto you.

But if you reject the counsel of the Lord in these lines, which in his love I am moved to send unto you, then shall I lament your condition, because of the evil consequence your separation will produce to your sorrow, and the wounding of many whom God would not have wounded;—for which you must give an account. And before you lay down your heads in peace, you will remember me, who have not hid from

you the counsel of the Lord.

—W. D.

Warwick, 21st of Eleventh month, 1684

WILLIAM DEWSBURY TO FRIENDS

Dear, precious, and beloved Friends, called in the light of the Lord to stand living witnesses for God, in the midst of a crooked, wicked, perverse, and untoward generation.

Dear Friends, in the pure and meek spirit of the Lord, enter into the chamber of rest, which God has prepared for you in his unlimited power. Stay your minds, and keep your confidence, and hold fast your faith, that so the door may be shut, that not anything may enter which would produce feebleness of mind, faintness of spirit, or in the least measure cause you to stagger at the promises of the Lord, who has promised he will never leave us, nor forsake us. Then, what trial soever any of us be called unto, who love the Lord, and have given up our names unto him, he will not allow one hair of our heads to perish, but what shall be to the glory of his name, and the comfort of our souls forever. Many of us are witnesses of the faithfulness of our God, in making our passage pleasant through all trials and sufferings that have been unto this day; which is now manifesting itself, as was proclaimed among you in times past.

Therefore, I beseech you all, dear Friends, put not the day of the Lord afar off; for a general trial will come on all who make mention of the name of the Lord, that it may be known, who are truly born of God and who are not; that his precious jewels may be made up, who shall more and more shine forth in the brightness of his glory, being established in his light, life, and love, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, because the Lord is the strength of all that are born again. And for their sakes, he is making a short work in the earth, to hasten his peculiar people through these trials, according to the determination of his own will, for the glory of his name, and the comfort of the righteous seed which the Lord has blessed; that so, he may establish peace in the earth, and purity and holiness among the children of men, which will be the end of all these tribulations.

Therefore, wait in the faith and patience, and be faithful in obedience, as at other times, with the loins of your minds girt up to the Lord, to rest in his unlimited power, and reign in a quiet still mind, giving up both goods and life freely; casting all your care upon the Lord; who will answer the expectation of his people, and work a mighty deliverance, neither by sword nor spear, but by his own outstretched arm, in the day of his dreadful vengeance, which he is hastening upon the earth, that shall cause all hearts to fail who know not God. The wicked shall confess to his righteous judgments, and the righteous shall bow before him, and the heathen shall know he is our God, and that we have not trusted in his name in vain; for he will judge righteously upon the earth, and give unto every man according to the deeds done in the body.

Then, woe to the proud and wicked, it shall go ill with them! Ah! but, you dear suffering innocent people of the Lord, lift up your hands and rejoice, for the Lord is tender over you as towards the apple of his eye, and great is the reward of the faithful; it is you who shall reap the fruit of your doings, and shall rejoice, when the wicked shall howl, in the sense of his fierce wrath, for he will get him self a glorious name, in consuming his enemies with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming.

Even so, hasten your work, oh Lord! it is the breathing of my soul, with all yours, that your dear children may be delivered from their oppressors, that in your power and life they may be kept by you, to the perfecting your glory forever!—where is the rest of your dear brother,

—W. D.

WILLIAM DEWSBURY TO FRIENDS IN YORKSHIRE.

My dear Friends, who are convinced of the blessed truth,

Wait in the light, that you may truly experience Christ in you, baptizing you with the Holy Ghost and fire, rendering vengeance upon all in you that obeys not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so you will come to witness you are of the number of the slain of the Lord, and conformable to him in his sufferings and death. And you that are in the sense of your miserable and lost estate, wait upon the Lord, weeping and seeking the Lord your God, asking the way to Zion with your faces thitherward, until the Lord cause your souls to hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear his voice live, but not in themselves, nor to themselves, but the life you then live is Christ in you, and you in him.

Oh! blessed are you that witness what is here written; for you are the true members of the body of Christ, who abhor yourselves, and admire the Lord with all his saints, in whom he is admired. Oh! praise the Lord all you his dear children for his wonderful works, in leading you in his narrow way, and through his strait gate, which so few find. The Lord keep you by his mighty power, that you may contend for the faith, and keep it, which the Lord has delivered unto his saints, that through faith you may have victory over your own wills, and over the world, with all the pomp, pride, and pleasure of it, and so delight in the daily cross, to be the well-seasoned, savory people, in all your words and works, to glorify our Father which is in heaven:—even so be it with you, is the prayer of your ever-loving brother,

—WILLIAM DEWSBURY

THE END