Letters

by

Isaac Penington

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LETTERS

OF

ISAAC PENINGTON,

AN EMINENT MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

IN

The Society of Friends.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."—Luke 1:53.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY THE
ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS FOR THE DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS
AND USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

1858.
PREFACE.

The following letters form part of a collection published by John Barclay in England in 1828, and since republished in this country. Their author, Isaac Penington, was a member and minister of the religious society of Friends, and was the son of Alderman Penington, of London, who during two years was Mayor of that city, and a noted member of the Long Parliament. The letters were written at various intervals between the time at which Isaac Penington joined the Society of Friends, which was about the year 1658, and his death, which took place in 1679.

Both the English and American editions having been exhausted, it has been thought that it might be useful to reprint such of the letters as could be comprised in a volume of this series. With reference to economy of space, the selection is chiefly confined to those which are hortatory in character.

Probably few have realized with more fullness the spiritual nature of Christianity than did Isaac Penington. His own relation of what befell him in his pursuit after truth cannot fail, therefore, to be deeply instructive.

"I was acquainted," he says, "with a spring of life from my childhood, which enlightened me in my tender years, and pointed my heart towards the Lord, begetting true sense in me, and faith, and hope, and love, and humility, and meekness, &c., so that indeed I was a wonder to some that knew me, because of the savour and life of religion which dwelt in my heart and appeared in my conversation.

"But I never durst trust the spring of my life, and the springings up of life therefrom; but, in reading the Scriptures, gathered what knowledge I could therefrom, and set this over the spring and springings of life in me, and indeed judged that I ought so to do.

"Notwithstanding which, the Lord was very tender and merciful to me.
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"But I never durst trust the spring of my life, and the springings up of life therefrom; but, in reading the Scriptures, gathered what knowledge I could therefrom, and set this over the spring and springings of life in me, and indeed judged that I ought so to do.

"Notwithstanding which, the Lord was very tender and merciful to me.
helping me to pray, and helping me to understand the Scriptures, and opening and warming my heart every day.

"And truly my soul was very near the Lord, and my heart was made and preserved very low and humble before him, and very sensible of his rich love and mercy to me in the Lord Jesus Christ; as I did daily from my heart cry grace, grace, unto him, in every thing my soul received and partook of from him.

"Indeed, I did not look to have been so broken, shattered, and distressed as I afterwards was, and could by no means understand the meaning thereof, my heart truly and earnestly desiring after the Lord, and not having the sense of any guilt upon me. Divers came to see me, some to inquire into and consider of my condition; others to bewail it, and if possible administer some relief, help, and comfort to me; and divers were the judgments they had concerning me. Some would say it was deep melancholy; others would narrowly search, and inquire how, and in what manner, and in what way, I had walked, and were jealous that I had sinned against the Lord and provoked him some way or other, and that some iniquity lay as a load upon me; but, after thorough converse with me, they would still express that they were of another mind, and that the hand of the Lord was in it, and it was an eminent case, and would end in good to my soul.

"At that time, when I was broken and dashed to pieces in my religion, I was in a congregational way, but soon after parted with them, yet in great love, relating to them how the hand of the Lord was upon me, and how I was smitten in the inward part of my religion, and could not now hold up an outward form of that which I inwardly wanted, having lost my God, my Christ, my faith, my knowledge, my life, my all. And so we parted very lovingly, I wishing them well, even the presence of that God whom I wanted, promising to return to them again if ever I met with that which my soul wanted, and had clearness in the Lord so to do.

"After I was parted from them, I never joined to any way or people; but lay mourning day and night, pleading with the Lord why he had forsaken me, and why I should be made so miserable through my love to him and sincere desires after him. For truly I can say, I had not been capable of so much misery as my soul lay in for many years, had not my love been so deep and true towards the Lord my God, and my desires so great after the sensible enjoyment of his spirit according to the promise and way of the gospel. Yet this I can also say, in uprightness of heart: It was not gifts I desired, to appear and shine before men in; but grace and holiness, and the spirit of the Lord dwelling in me, to act my heart by his grace, and to preserve me in holiness.

"Now indeed the Lord at length had compassion on me, and visited me, though in a time and way wherein I expected him not; nor was I willing, as to the natural part, to have that the way which God showed me to be the way; but the Lord opened my eye, and that which I knew to be of him
In me closed with it and owned it; and the pure seed was raised by his power, and my heart taught to know and own the seed, and to bow and worship before the Lord in the pure power which was then in my heart. So that of a truth I sensibly knew and felt my favour, and was taught by him to take up the cross, and to deny that understanding, knowledge, and wisdom which had so long stood in my way; and then I learned that lesson, being really taught it of the Lord, what it is to become a fool for Christ's sake. I cannot say but I had learned somewhat of it formerly; but I never knew how to keep to what I had learned till that day.

"And then God showed me by degrees, as He nurtured me up in the heavenly sense and experience of His spirit, the workings of the good in me, and the workings of the subtlety; and how Himself had, in times past, taught me to pray, and to understand the Scriptures, and to believe in His Son, and to know some things aright; but, withal, how a knowledge and understanding of another nature had crept in and gained ground upon me,—which indeed I knew not how to distinguish thoroughly from the other and watch against; and so the Truth came not to live in me, nor I to live in that, according to the utmost desire and travail of my soul.

"But now of a truth, by this blessed visitation of the everlasting gospel, the Lord hath at length brought me back to the same spring I was acquainted with at first, and joined my heart in true sense and understanding to it; so that the life that I live is by the springing up of life in me; and I know the Lord my God, by being daily taught by Him so to do; and I love Him, by feeling my heart circumcised and constrained through the new nature therewith. And truly it is natural to the good seed in me, and to my soul in and through the same, to trust my Father, and to suffer any thing that He requireth of me, who freely giveth me both to do and to suffer; for indeed I live not of myself, but by a continual gift, and quickening of life in my heart.

"And oh that others could also come to hear the testimony of truth and life from God's Holy Spirit, and be turned thereby to the pure principle and spirit of life itself, (which many formerly had a true taste of, but are now turned aside to another nature and spirit, though they themselves know it not,) that they might witness the gospel-power, the knowledge of the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem who is the mother and bringer-up of all that are truly living!"

At another time he writes, "But some may desire to know what I have at last met with; I answer, I have met with the Seed. Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied, and inquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my favour; and he hath not been present with me without his salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings; I have met with the true knowledge, the knowledge of life, the living knowledge, the knowledge which is life, and this hath had the true virtue in it, which my soul hath rejoiced in, in the presence of the Lord. I have met with the true spirit of prayer and supplication."

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wherein the Lord is prevailed with, and which draws from him whatever the condition needs, the soul always looking up to him in the will, and in the time and way which is acceptable with him. What shall I say? I have met with the true peace, the true righteousness, the true holiness, the true rest of the soul, the everlasting habitation, which the redeemed dwell in. And I know all these to be true, in Him that is true, and am capable of no doubt, dispute, or reasoning in my mind about them, it abiding there where it hath received the full assurance and satisfaction. And also I know very well and distinctly in spirit, where the doubts and disputes are, and where the certainty and full assurance is, and in the tender mercy of the Lord am preserved out of the one, and in the other.*

So devoted was Isaac Penington to the service of his Master, that, in common with many of his fellow-members, he was forced to undergo the punishment of human law for fulfilling what he believed to be the commands of the divine. Six times he was taken to jail for declining to take oaths, or for meeting with his friends to worship in a mode not approved by the Established Church, and in these imprisonments spent nearly five years of his life. It also appears that certain designing relatives, knowing their conscientious scruple against swearing, had involved him and his wife in a suit in chancery, where their answer without an oath was invalid. This resulted in the loss of his estate; and during one of the terms of his imprisonment his family were turned out of his house by the parties who had seized it, and were forced thenceforward to depend upon the property of his wife for their subsistence. But through these manifold trials his faith was firm. Having surrendered his will to his Maker, and having entered the path of duty, in quest of that happiness which he knew existed not elsewhere, he was enabled, while running the race, to keep in sight the crown which lay at the end.

While we feel that an adequate impression of Isaac Penington's character cannot be conveyed within the limits of a short preface, yet we can but refer to one feature of it which held a marked prominence. We allude to the strong current of his sympathies towards any who might be suffering
mental or spiritual distress. Having himself lived through weary years of loneliness of spirit, his heart was ready to be touched by the condition of those who in darkness were longing for the light of truth. So deep was at times the tenderness of his sorrowing solicitude on behalf of these, that his whole soul seemed to enter into feeling with them; and among the letters here published there are several which bear witness to the zeal of his endeavors to point them to the way of life.

The following extract from a testimony concerning him, written by his friend Thomas Ellwood, beautifully portrays his Christian character:—

"As he had freely received of the Lord, so did he freely and readily communicate thereof, as the following sheets do witness, unto such as stood in need of counsel, advice, information, or direction in their travel to the heavenly country. To which service he was fitted, and very well furnished by the experiences of his own travel; for the Lord had led him through many a strait and difficulty, through many temptations, trials, and exercises, by which He had tried and proved him: not only through the Red Sea and the wilderness had he passed, but the bottom of Jordan also had he seen, and the upholding, delivering arm of the Lord through all he had known and felt; whereby he was able to speak a word of information to the bewildered passenger, a word of encouragement to the weary and fainting traveller, a word of comfort to the afflicted soul, and of consolation to the wounded spirit. And oh, how sweetly have I heard it flow from him! how has it dropped like the dew and distilled like the gentle rain! Ah, how tender, how compassionate, how full of bowels and feeling sympathy was he! Surely His words have been many times like apples of gold in pictures of silver. For of a truth the Lord was with him, and His heavenly power did often fill his Temple; and the spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and the fruits thereof were plenti-
fully brought forth through him in love, in joy, in peace, in
long-suffering, in gentleness, in goodness, in faith, in meek-
ness, and in temperance, so richly did the word of the Lord
dwell in him. His delight was in the service of God, to
which he was wholly given up, and in it spent most of his
time, either publicly in meetings waiting upon God, or
privately in visiting and ministering unto those that were
distressed or anyway afflicted in mind or body; and, when
at home, he was frequent in retirements and very inward
with the Lord. Very fervent he was in prayer, and very
frequent; for the spirit of grace and supplication was plenti-
fully poured upon him, by which he often wrestled with the
Lord, and not in vain. The Holy Scriptures he read much,
and with great delight and profit; for he made it not a cur-
sory or formal business, nor sought to pick out the meaning
by his natural wit or learning, but, with a great composedness
of mind and reverence of spirit, waited to receive the true
sense of them from the openings of that Divine Spirit by
which the penmen of them were inspired. Great and strong
was the travail of his spirit for the conversion of others,
and in a more especial manner did his love flow and bowels
yearn after the professors of religion, for whom he continu-
ally and earnestly labored both by word and writing, not
cessing to seek them to his dying day, that they might be
brought off from the shadows and come at length to inherit
substance. And, blessed be the Lord, by the powerful ope-
ration of the Spirit of God, through his ministry many
were turned to the truth and many confirmed in it; for the
Lord was with him, and spake by him, so that his teaching
was with divine authority, in the demonstration of the spirit
and of power. To the world and the affairs of it he was
very much a stranger, but deeply experienced in the things
of God; for, his affection being set on things above, his con-
nversation was in heaven, and his life hid with Christ in God.
He was but a pilgrim on the earth, and is now gone home.”
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LETTERS OF ISAAC PENINGTON.

LETTER I.

OF A GROWTH IN GRACE AMIDST DISTRESSING EXERCISES OF SPIRIT.

To Bridget Atley.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—
If thy heart come to feel the seed of God, and to wait upon him in the measure of his life, he will be tender of thee as a father of his child, and his love will be naturally breaking forth towards thee. This is the end of all his dealings with thee, to bring thee hither, to make thee fit and capable of entering and abiding here. And he hath changed, and doth change thy spirit daily; though it be as the shooting up of the corn, whose growth cannot be discerned at present by the most observing eye, but it is very manifest afterwards that it hath grown. My heart is refreshed for thy sake, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness towards thee; and that the blackness of darkness begins to scatter from thee, though the enemy be still striving the same way to enter and distress thee again. But
wait to feel the relieving measure of life, and heed not distressing thoughts, when they arise ever so strongly in thee; nay, though they have entered thee, fear them not, but be still a while, not believing in the power which thou feelest they have over thee, and it will fall on a sudden.

It is good for thy spirit, and greatly to thy advantage, to be much and variously exercised by the Lord. Thou dost not know what the Lord hath already done, and what he is yet doing for thee therein. Ah! how precious it is to be poor, weak, low, empty, naked, distressed for Christ's sake, that way may be made for the power and glory of his life in the heart! And, oh, learn, daily more and more, to trust him and hope in him, and not to be affrighted with any amazement, nor to be taken up with the sight of the present thing; but wait for the shutting of thy own eye upon every occasion, and for the opening of the eye of God in thee, and for the sight of things therewith, as they are from him. It is no matter what the enemy strives to do in thy heart, nor how distressed thy condition is, but what the Lord will do for thee, which is with patience to be waited for at his season in every condition. And though sin overtake, let not that bow down; nor let the eye open in thee, which stands poring at that: but wait for the healing through the chastisement, and know there is an Advocate, who, in that hour, hath an office of love and a faithful heart towards thee. Yea, though thou canst not believe, yet be not dismayed thereof; thy Advocate, who
undertakes thy cause, hath faith to give: only do
thou sink into, or at least pant after the hidden
measure of life, which is not in that which distress-
eth, disturbeth, and filleth thee with thoughts, fears,
troubles, anguish, darknesses, terrors, and the like;
no, no! but in that which inclines to the patience,
to the stillness, to the hope, to the waiting, to the
silence before the Father: this is the same in nature,
with the most refreshing and glorious-visiting life,
though not the same in appearance; and, if thy mind
be turned to it, not minding but overlooking the
other, thou wilt find some of the same virtue spring-
ing up in thy heart and soul, at least to stay thee.

In and through these things, thou wilt become
deeply acquainted with the nature of God, and know
the wonderful riches and virtue of his life, the
mightiness of his power, and the preciousness of his
love, tenderness of his mercy, and infiniteness of his
wisdom, the glory also, and exactness of his righteous-
ness, &c.: thou wilt be made large in spirit to receive
and drink in abundantly of them; and the snares of
the enemy will be so known to thee and discerned,
the way of help so manifest and easy, that their
strength will be broken, and the poor entangled bird
will fly away singing, from the nets and entangle-
ments of the fowler; and praises will spring up, and
great love in thy heart to the Forgiver and Redeemer.
Oh, wait, hope, trust, look up to thy God! look over
that which stands between; come into his mercy!
let in the faith which openeth the way of life, which
will shut out the distrusting and doubting mind, and
will close up the wrong eye, that letteth in reason-
ings and temptations, the wrong sense, and death
with them.

Thus mayest thou witness, in and through thy
Redeemer, the abundance of his life and peace.

I. P.

LETTER II.

THE COMPASSION OF THE SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK
TOWARDS THE WEAK, ETC.—HOW THEY SHOULD
FOLLOW HIM.

To Friends.

He that is weak and foolish among the lambs, con-
tinually ready to wander, both out of the pastures
and from the fold, and thus to betray his life into the
hands of the enemy;—he who is continually scatter-
ing and squandering away what the Lord in mercy
gathers for him, and freely bestows upon him; who,
through drowsiness and carelessness, hath lost the
benefit of, and forfeited the sweet and tender visit-
ations of the Most High; and is now become dry,
dead, barren, thick, earthy;—O my God! let that soul
feel the stirrings of the springs of life, and find some
encouragements from thee, to hope in the free and
large mercies of the Shepherd of Israel; who casteth
not off his sheep because of their wanderings, be-
cause of their backslidings, because of their infirmities, because of their diseases, nay, not because of their hardness; but pursues them with his love, findeth them out, visiteth with his correcting hand according to their need, woundeth with his sword, and melteth in his fire, until he hath made them tender and pliable, and then he pours in the fresh oil of his salvation and sweetly healeth them.

O my friends and brethren in the pure life! be faithful to the Lord in returning him all the incomes of his Spirit; follow on in every drawing of his love, while any of the virtue of it lasts upon your spirits. Walk with him all the day long, and wait for him all the night season. And, in case of erring from him, or sinning grievously against him, be not discouraged; for he is a God of mercies, and delighteth in pardoning and forgiving much and very often. What tender mother can be more ready to forgive and embrace the child, that appears broken and afflicted with her sore displeasure! Yea, He giveth brokenness, He melteth the heart, that he may be tender towards, and embrace it in his arms of reconciliation, and in the peace of his Spirit.

O my dear companions, and fellow-travellers in spirit towards the land of the living! all the motions of the life are cross to the corrupt [part]—dwell [in the life,] draw the yoke close about your necks, that ye may come into unity with the life, and the corrupt be worn out. Take the yoke, the cross, the contrariety of Jesus upon your spirits daily; that that
may be worn out which hinders the unity, and so, ye may feel your King and Saviour exalted upon his throne in your hearts: this is your rest, peace, life, kingdom, and crown forever. I P.

———

LETTER III.
ON SEARCHING FOR THE HIDDEN TREASURE, AND SELLING ALL FOR IT.

To Catherine Pordage.

FRIEND:—
Thy estate and condition hath been pretty much with me since I last saw thee. I am sensible how hard it is for thee, to give up to be reached by the seed and power of life; how readily and easily thy ear and heart is opened to another, and the adulterer entertained, who hunteth after the precious life. This word of advice hath been much in my heart to thee this morning: sit down and count the cost of ploughing up thy field, and of searching after the hidden treasure of pure and true wisdom, and consider seriously, whether thou canst sell all for it, both inward and outward riches; that, if thou do set thy hand to the plough, thou mayest not look back after any thing else, within or without, but mayest be content and satisfied with the pearl of true wisdom and life alone.

Now, if thou be truly willing in God's sight thus
to do, thou must singly give up to follow the Lord in the leadings of his Spirit, out of all the ways of thy own wisdom and knowledge, out of all things wherein thou hast a life and delight out of him; thou must not determine what thou hast a life in, but the Lord must search thy heart, and he will soon show thee (if thy heart be naked and open before him, willing to hear and learn of him) somewhat in thy heart, somewhat in thy ways, somewhat in thy words, thoughts, &c. which is contrary to his pure life and Spirit; and then, that must be denied and given up immediately. And afterwards, perhaps the Lord will soon discover to thee another lover, which hath had more of thy heart than thou hast been aware of; and so, thou must part with one after another, until thou hast parted with all: and this will prepare thee for the bosom of thy Beloved, who is a jealous God, and seeth not with the eye where-with man seeth. But, if thou be not thus singly given up, though thou should put thy hand to the plough, thou wilt be looking back some time or other: and that wisdom which draweth aside from the Lord will blind thy eye and deceive thy mind, and draw thee from the simplicity and nakedness of Truth, into some image or other of it, so that, instead of the pure Truth itself, thou wilt believe and embrace a lie.

Thou hast travelled long in the heights above the seed; Oh, consider, if that be not yet standing in thee, which could not have been found standing, &
thou hadst known the true seed, and travelled therewith. This enhances the price of Truth as to thee, that thou must part with more for it, than will be required of many others; yet, if thou be faithful to the Lord, and diligently follow him in the simplicity, Truth will at length recompense thee for all thy labors, sorrows, and travels. But a thorough work will the Lord make in thy earth, if thou singly give up unto him, and faithfully follow; and many devices wilt thou meet with, to turn thy mind out of the way, and to cause thee to shun the bitterness of the cross, and to kindle and nourish a hope in thee, that thou mayest find a more easy way to the same life and everlasting substance. The Lord hath reached to thee, and the Lord is willing to search thy heart, to find out the deceiver and enemy in his most secret lurking-places; but, when the Lord hath found him out, thou must give him up to God's stroke, and not suffer him to find a shelter in thy mind to save him therefrom. For he is very subtle, and will twist and twine all manner of ways to deceive thee and save himself; nor art thou yet acquainted with, or able to discern his devices. The Lord alone can help thee; and he will help thee, if thou be not hasty to join with the enemy, nor give up thy judgment to believe what he represents, and seems inwardly to represent to thee as true; but abide and dwell in the sense of thy own inability to judge, waiting to feel that which is true, pure, and living of God, judge in thee, not so much in demonstrations of wisdom, as in
tender and secret drawings of the beginnings of a new nature, away from what is of an earthly nature. For thou must come out of the spirit of this world, if thou wilt come into God's Spirit; and thou must come out of the love of the things of this world, if thou wilt come out of the spirit of this world; for, in the love of the things of this world, the spirit of this world lodgeth and dwelleth, and thou canst not touch the unclean thing, but thou also touchest somewhat of the unclean spirit. Therefore, said John, from a true and deep understanding, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world," (if thou love the things of the world, thou lovest the world,) for, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The day of God's mercy and visitation is upon thee, who is visiting that spirit in thee which hath led thee aside, even with the judgment proper for it; that Zion in thee might be thereby redeemed, and thy soul converted to, and truly brought forth in righteousness. I. P.

11th of First Month, 1670.

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LETTER IV.

THE DUTY OF BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT IS MADE KNOWN.

The enemy kindles a great distress in the mind, by stirring up an earnest desire, and a sense of a
seeming necessity, to know. When a motion ariseth, how shall I do, to know whether it be of God or no? For, if it be of God, it ought to be obeyed; and, if it be not of God, it ought to be resisted; but what shall I do, who cannot tell what it is? I must of necessity fall, either into disobedience to God's Spirit, or into the snares of the enemy. Thus the enemy raiseth up a strength in the reasoning part, even unanswerable there. But what if it be better for thee, at present, to be darkened about these things, than as yet to know? Can that possibly be? will the strong reason readily say. Yes, that it may, in many respects. There is somewhat else would live and be acting in thee, if the clear and heavenly knowledge were given; and thou wouldst be centring in self that which thou receivedst from God; yea, thou wouldst miss of the way of true knowledge, and never learn in every state to be content, nor know the pure way and actings of life in such a state. Truly, this is not the way of the child's knowing; but the child knows, in resignation and subjection of its very knowledge; and if there appear ever so great a necessity of knowledge, and yet knowledge be not given, it sinks, in fear and humility, into the will of the pure seed; and there somewhat springs up (unknown to the natural wisdom, and not in the way of man's wisdom) which at seasons preserves and bears it up in such a state. But this is a great mystery; yet sensibly experienced by the true travelers at this day.
Therefore, retire out of all necessities, according to the apprehension of the reasoning mind; and judge that only necessary, which God, in his eternal wisdom and love, proportions out unto us. And when thou comest hither, thou wilt come to thy rest; and as thou abidest here, thou wilt abide in thy soul's true rest, and know the preciousness of that lesson, and of whom thou art to learn it, even, in every state to be content. L. P.

LETTER V.

ON FAITH IN THE HEALING POWER OF CHRIST.

FRIEND:—

I have had of late some deep and serious thoughts concerning thee, and a sense of thee, as between the Lord and my own soul, yet I have not had any thing to signify or express to thee, till this morning. But somewhat this morning sprang up in my heart, sweetly and freshly, which I had pure drawings to impart to thee.

There was a quick sense of thee upon my heart, and in that sense this cry was in me:—Oh that thou wert acquainted with the pure, eternal power of the Lord, and mightst feel his outstretched arm revealed in thee, and witness the faith which stands in that power; and, in that faith, believe and wait for what God is doing, and willing to do, in and for thee.
his children. "If ye had faith," said Christ, "but as a grain of mustard-seed, ye should say to this mountain, Be thou cast into the midst of the sea, and it should be so." Indeed, the true faith, the pure faith, the living faith, which stands in the power, doth remove all the mountains that are in the way, and makes the crooked ways straight, and the rough ways plain. If thou had lived in the days of Christ's flesh, and wanted outward healing, and had been willing to come to him for healing, but withal had not come with faith that he was able and willing to heal perfectly, mightest not thou have missed of that cleansing and outward health and salvation, which others met with? For, did not he say, "Be it unto thee according to thy faith"? And is not he the Physician of the soul? and is not his skill to be trusted and believed in? He that hopeth, and believeth, and waiteth, and prayeth, and fighteth the good fight of faith, which gives victory over sin, Satan, and the world,—he may possibly overcome; yea, he that warreth lawfully, (that is, with the spiritual weapon, which is mighty through God,) he that warreth with this only, and with this constantly, shall be sure to overcome. For greater is He that is in the true believer, than he that is in the world.

Oh that thou mightest have experience of these things, and witness the banner of Christ's love and power displayed in thee, and the victories and conquests that are thereby, and the safety and peace which is under it! For, of a truth, we do not speak
boastingly, but are witnesses of the majesty of God's love and power, which we testify of. The Lord so enlighten and guide thee, that thou mayest obtain the desires of thy heart; for I really believe thy desire is after holiness and after communion with the Father and the Son, and with the saints in light: Oh that thou mayest be led into the true pure light of life, that there thou mayest enjoy what in this kind thou desirest!

This is from one, who singly, as in the Lord's sight, wisheth well unto thee.

Reading Jail, 27th of Eighth Month, 1670.

I. P.

LETTER VI.

ADVICE TO ONE RESPECTING THE DARK SUGGESTIONS OF THE ENEMY.

DEAR FRIEND:

Thou hast had the path of salvation faithfully testified of to thee, and hast come to a sense of the thing; even to the feeling of that, whereby the Father begetteth life, and manifesteth his love and peace, in and to the soul. Now, what remains? but that thou look up to the Lord, to guide thy feet in this path, and to preserve from that which darkens and leads out of the way; that thou mayest pass on thy journey safely, and come to the inheritance and enjoyment of that which thy soul longeth after.
There is life, there is peace, there is joy, there is righteousness, there is health, there is salvation, there is power of redemption, in the seed: yea, there is so. But thy soul wants, and doth not enjoy these things. Well, but how mayest thou come to enjoy them? There is no way, but union with the seed, knowing the seed, hearing the voice of the seed, learning of, and becoming subject to, the seed. "Learn of me, take my yoke upon you," saith Christ, "and ye shall find rest to your souls." Wouldst thou feel thy soul's rest in Christ? Thou must know the seed's voice, hear it, learn daily of him, become his disciple; take up from his nature what is contrary to thy nature. And then, as thy nature is worn out, and his nature comes up in thee, thou wilt find all easy; all that is of life easy, and transgression hard—unbelief hard: yes, thou wilt find it very hard and unnatural, when the nature of the seed is grown up in thee, either to distrust the Lord or hearken to his enemy. And then thou wilt change that dwelling-place (into which Satan brings dark thoughts, suggestions, and reasonings) for the dwelling-place which is from above, which is the habitation of the righteous; wherein there is light, life, peace, satisfaction, health, salvation, and rejoicing of soul, from and before the Lord.

Now, do not say, Who shall do thus for me? but know, the arm of the Lord is mighty, and brings mighty things to pass; and that arm hath been revealed in thee, and is at work for thee. Oh that thou couldst trust it! (why canst thou not? hath it not
sown a seed of faith in thee?) and come into and abide in the path, wherein its mighty, powerful operations are felt and made manifest! And oh that thou mayest find ability to watch against that which bows down, and not so let in, as thou hast done exceedingly, to the grievous wounding and distressing of thy soul! For the enemy's dark suggestions work according to their nature, and if thou let them lie upon thee, how can they but darken, afflict, and perplex thee?

Therefore, in the evil hour, fly from all things that thus arise in thee; and lie still, feel thy stay, till his light, which "makes manifest," arise in thee, and clear up things to thee. And think not the time of darkness long; but watch that thy heart be kept empty, and thy mind clear of thoughts and belief of things, till he bring in somewhat, which thou mayest safely receive. Therefore, say to thy thoughts and to thy belief of things, (according to the representation of the dark power, in the time of thy darkness,) "Get thee hence!" And if that will not do, look up to the Lord to speak to them, and to keep them out, if they be not already entered, or to thrust them out, if they be already got in. And, if he do not so presently, or for a long time, yet do not murmur or think much, but wait till he do. Yea, though they violently thrust themselves upon thee, and seem to have entered thy mind, yet let them be as strangers to thee; receive them not, believe them not, know them not, own them not; and thy bosom will, notwithstanding, be chaste.
in the eye of the Lord, though they may seem to thee to have defiled thee.

Look up to the Father, that thou mayest learn this of him: and, becoming faithful to him therein, thou wilt find thy darkness abate, and its strength more and more broken in thee; and thou wilt not only feel and taste a little now and then, but also come to possess and inherit, and rejoice before the Lord in thy portion.

Thy friend in the Truth which changeth not, but is pure, and preserveth pure forever. I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 28th of Seventh Month, 1667.

LETTER VII.

ON TRUE JUDGMENT, AND ON PREJUDICES; ALSO ON THE VARIETY OF GIFTS AND STATIONS IN THE CHURCH.

To Friends of Truth in and about the two Chalfonts.*

As a father watcheth over his children, so do I wait and desire to feel the Lord watching over my soul continually. And in his love, care, wise and tender counsel, is my safety, life, and peace, and I never yet repented either waiting for him or hearken-

* I. P. and his wife appear to have been instrumental in gathering the Friends of that neighborhood to the knowledge of the Truth, as held by the Society.
ing to him. But if I have hearkened at any time to anything else, and mistook his voice, and entertained the enemy's deceitful appearance, instead of his pure Truth, (which it is very easy to do,) that grievous mistake hath proved matter of loss and sorrow to my soul.

Now, oh my Friends, that ye might know and hear the voice of the Preserver! so shall ye be preserved, and kept from the voice of the stranger, which draweth aside from the pure principle of life, and the true feeling sense. There is that near you which watcheth to betray: Oh, the God of my life, joy, peace, and hope, watch over your souls, and deliver you from the advantages which, at any time, it hath against any of you. The seed which God hath sown in you is pure and precious. Oh that it may be found living in you, and ye abiding in it! Oh that no other seed may, at any time, usurp authority over it! but that ye may know the authority and pure Truth which is of God, and therein stand, in the pure dominion, over all that is against him. For, in the principle of life, which ye have known and received in measure, is dominion; and ye, therein preserved, are in the dominion over the impure and deceitful one; and that judging in you hath power to judge all impurity and deceivableness, as the light thereof pleaseth to make it manifest to you; but, out of that, ye will easily become a prey, and set up darkness for light, and account light darkness; and then, a wrong wisdom, confidence, and conceitedness, will get up in
you, and lead you far out of the way and spirit of Truth. O my dear friends, that that may be kept down in you, which is forward to judge, to approve or disapprove; and may the weighty judgment of the seed be waited for! And, oh, do not judge, do not judge, before the light of the day shine in you, and give forth the judgment; but stand and walk in fear and humility, and tenderness of spirit, and silence of flesh, that the Lord be not provoked against any of you, to give you up to a wrong sense and judgment, to the hurt of your souls. And mind your own states, and the feeling of life in your own vessels; which will keep you pure, precious, and chaste in the eye of the Lord. And, oh, do not meddle with talking about others, which eats out the inward life, and may exalt your spirits out of your place, and above your proper growth: be as the weaned child, simple, naked, meek, humble, tender; easily led by and subjected to the Father; so will ye grow in that which is of God, and be preserved out of that which hunteth after the pure life to betray and destroy it. I have an interest in you,—my cries are to the Lord for you, and I exceedingly thirst after your preservation and growth in that which is pure; and in that breathing, longing spirit towards you, was it in my heart at this time to write unto you.

The Lord God of my mercies, hope, and life watch over you for good, and keep your hearts in the pure and single watch, that the enemy, by any subtle device of his, break not in upon you, nor ye, by any
temptation, be allured or drawn from the Lord; but may know the pure, eternal, everlasting habitation, and may dwell and abide therein, to the joy of your own souls, and the rejoicing of the hearts of all that have travailed for you in the Spirit of the Lord.

From your brother and companion in the faith, patience, and afflictions of the seed, I. P.

Aylesbury Prison,
25th of Eleventh Month, 1666.

 LETTER VIII.

THE DAY OF GOD'S POWER AND LOVE.

To John Mannock.

Friend:—

Hath the Lord drawn thy heart to hear the sound of Truth, and given thee some sense and savor thereof; though, perhaps, not as yet full satisfaction in all things that are truly and faithfully testified concerning it? Oh, prize this love of God to thee! and watch and pray, and come into the pure fear, that thou mayst walk worthy of it, and mayst discern in spirit what it is that gives thee the savor, and so receive the leaven of the kingdom, and feel its leavening virtue upon thy heart day by day. For, after the Lord hath been at work, the enemy will be at work also; and thou mayst both meet with him with-
out, and within too, in reasonings and questionings against the demonstrations of God's Spirit to thy heart and conscience. Now, if thou wilt hearken to these, they will eat out the sense and belief of what God's Spirit begat in thee. Oh, how many wise men, and how many knowing men, that have tasted of some true experiences, have not the sense and discerning of the Spirit and power of the Lord, as it is now made manifest, but speak hard words and think hard thoughts of his Truth and its precious appearances!

Ah! what are we, any of us, on whom the Lord hath shown his mercy, and whose hearts he toucheth and maketh sensible of his drawings; yea, and not only so, but also gives us to partake of the eternal life and virtue, which he hath hid in his Son from the eyes of all living? We sought it up and down, in the deeps and heights; but the deeps said, It is not in me, and the highest mountain and hill that ever we met with could not bring salvation to us. But, at length, we found the fear of the Lord to be the true wisdom, and that which taught us to depart from evil gave us the true understanding. Now, if any among us are not thus taught, but only own the doctrines of Truth published among us, being thereunto overcome by the demonstration of God's Spirit; yet, for all this, they are not felt by us in the life and unity of the Spirit of the Lord with us; and such, the Lord will manifestly prune off, in his own due time, and graft in others in their stead. Yes, such
as do indeed give up to Truth, and in measure feel the power of it, and are made by the power of the Lord subject to it—yet, if in any thing they let in the spirit of the world, and act according thereto, so far they are not of the Truth nor owned by it.

Now, dear friend, (for, so far as thy heart is touched by God’s Spirit and answereth thereto, thou art dear unto me,) mind thy condition, and wait on the Lord in humility of heart, and in subjection to what he inwardly, by his Spirit, daily makes manifest; that thou mayest come into the obedience of the Truth daily; that thou mayest daily feel the change which is wrought in the heart and conscience by the holy, eternal, ever-living power; that so thou mayest witness, according to the Scriptures, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” And then thou wilt feel that this birth of the Spirit cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but will be warring and fighting the good fight of faith, in the power of life, against them; and thus, in faithfulness to the Truth and waiting upon the Lord, thou shalt witness an overcoming in his due time. For, indeed, the true faith overcomes, the true shield beats down the most fiery darts, and, in the power of the Lord, the enemy is so resisted that he fleeth; and the name of the Lord is, indeed, a strong tower to his children, to which his seed know how to retire and feel safety.

Oh, the conquering faith, the overcoming life and power, of the Spirit! We cannot but speak of those things, and cry up the perfect gift and the power of
Him who is not only able to perfect his work in the heart, but delights so to do, and even to tread down Satan under the feet of those that wait in patience for the perfect conquest; for nothing else will fully satisfy. The rest, the peace, the liberty, the life, the virtue of the gospel is not fully known and enjoyed while there remains any sin to sting and trouble. And this I can faithfully witness,—that when the power is revealed, when the blood washeth, the soul is clean and as white as snow, and the enemy hath not power to break in, but life triumphs over him. And why may there not be a continuance of such a state? Yea, I verily believe, many can witness a continuance of such a state, which the Spirit of the Lord doth not call less in them than a perfect state, a sound state, wherein Christ, the heavenly Physician, hath healed them perfectly, and made them witnesses of true soundness of soul and spirit in the sight of God. Oh that all knew and enjoyed it who truly desire and long after it!

But as for thee, this is in my heart to thee. Thou hast found the pearl: the Lord, in mercy to thee, has discovered to thee the true pearl. Now, this remains,—that thou be a wise merchant, selling all to purchase it. Thou must keep back nothing. Christ, the living Truth, the holy power of righteousness, must be dearer to thee than all. If father, mother, livelihood, liberty, friendship, outward advantages, &c., or any thing else, be dearer to thee than him, he will look upon thee as unworthy of
him, and cannot but turn from thee, and suffer hardness and darkness to come again upon thee. Therefore, prize the day of thy visitation from the holy God, from the God of mercy and salvation; and be faithful in the little, in the day of small things, if ever thou desire to enjoy and be ruler over much. The Lord may exercise thee in, and require of thee, little things, as he hath done the rest of the flock, whose footsteps thou art to follow to the Shepherd's tents; and the enemy will be endeavoring to stop thee and perplex thee in every little thing that the Lord requires of thee. But be thou simple like a child, not taking care what to answer wise professors, nor what to answer the reasonings of thy own mind; but, seeing thou hast felt the demonstration of Truth from God's Holy Spirit, oh, breathe unto the Lord to preserve thee in the innocency and simplicity thereof, that the Lord may still be with thee, and thereby bring thee through the day of Jacob's trouble, to taste of Jacob's deliverance and salvation out of trouble: for thou must meet with trials as well as others have done, and the enemy's endeavor will be to make thee stumble and start back in the day of trial. But, if thine eye be towards the Lord, he will uphold and strengthen thee, and bring thee through all that stands in thy way; manifesting to thee daily, more and more, the path of holiness in which the ransomed of the Lord walk, and enabling thee also to walk therein.

Therefore, watch the thoughts and reasonings
which rise in thee, and retire from them, waiting to
feel the pure seed and to hear its voice in stillness;
whose voice is otherwise than after the noises of the
questionings and reasonings which the enemy raiseth
in the mind to fill it with doubts and troubles; and
to weaken the faith and sense which God wrought in
the heart when he reached forth his Truth, in the
power and demonstration of his Spirit, unto it. This
was God’s love, this was the day of his power, which
loosens the mind from its lovers and the ways of its
own choosing, and begets a willingness to be joined
to the Lord and his pure Truth.

Oh, take heed of hearkening to the enemy, to the
subtle reasoner, the entangler of the soul! take heed
of consulting there, where he lays his baits to en-
tangle the mind and undo the work of God’s power
in the heart; and so, to make unwilling again, after
the Lord had made willing. The steps which the
soul takes in the power, even the inclining of the
mind towards the Lord and his pure Truth, tend to
salvation; but, if any let in unbelief of those things
concerning which God had wrought faith in them,
they draw back to perdition, they hearken to that
which tempts from the Lord, and to him whose end
is to destroy them.

This is in true love to thee, and from an upright
desire that thou mayest feel the Lord’s preservation
of thy soul in that which is of him, and his separating
thee from all that is not of him.

From a friend to all that breathe after the Lord,
and desire to know and partake of the power and life of Truth as it is in Jesus, the alone Redeemer and Saviour of the soul. I. P.

3d or 4th of Tenth Month, 1668.

LETTER X.

ON SIMPLICITY OF FAITH AND DEDICATION.

To John Mannock.

FRIEND:—

It is a wonderful thing to witness the power of God reaching to the heart, and demonstrating to the soul, the pure way of life, as in his sight and presence. Surely, he that partakes of this is therein favored by the Lord, and ought diligently to wait for the giving up to the leadings of his Holy Spirit in every thing; that so he may travel through all that is contrary to the Lord into that nature and spirit which is of Him. It is a wonderful thing, also, to witness God’s preservation from backsliding, and from being entangled by the subtlety of the enemy, who hath many ways and taking devices to ensnare the simple mind, and draw it from the sense of Truth into some notions and belief of things wherein the soul may be lulled asleep with hopes and persuasions, but hath not the feeling or enjoyment of the true life and power.

Oh, friend, hast thou a sense of the way to the
Father? then be careful that thy spirit daily bow before him, and wait for breathings to him from his pure Spirit, that he would continue his mercy to thee, keeping thee in the true sense, and making thy way more and more clear before thee every day; yea, and bearing thee up in all the exercises and trials which may befall thee in every kind; that, by his secret working in thy spirit, and helping thee with a little help from time to time, thou mayest still be advancing nearer and nearer towards the kingdom, until thou find the Lord God administer an entrance unto thee thereinto, and give thee an inheritance of life, joy, righteousness, and peace therein; which is strength unto the soul against sin and death, and against the sorrow and trouble which ariseth in the mind for want of God's presence and holy power revealed there.

And be not careful after the flesh, but trust the Lord. What though thou art weak and little; though thou meet with those that are wise and knowing, and almost every way able to reason thee down; what though thou hast not wherewith to answer, yet thou knowest and hast the feeling of God's pure Truth in spirit, with a desire to have the life of it brought forth in thee, and so to witness the change and renewings which are by his power. Oh, dear heart! herein thou art accepted of the Lord, and here his tender love and care will be over thee, and his mercy will daily reach to thee; and thou shalt have true satisfaction in thy heart, and hold the Truth
there, where all the reasonings of men, and all the
devices of the enemy of thy soul, shall not be able to
reach; yea, thou shalt so feel the Lord to help his
babe against the strength of the mighty, in the
seasons of his good pleasure, as shall exceedingly
turn to his praise: and so thou shalt experience that
whom God preserves, all the gates of hell shall not
be able to prevail against. Therefore look not out at
men, or at the words and wisdom of men, but keep
where thou hast felt the Lord visit thee, that he may
visit thee yet again and again every day, and be
teaching thee further and further the way to his
dwelling-place, and be drawing thee thither, where
is righteousness, life, rest, and peace, forever.

This arose in my heart this morning in tender love
towards thee. Look up to the Lord, who can make
it useful to thee, to warm, quicken, and strengthen
thy heart and mind towards the Lord and his pure
Truth, wherewith he has visited thee. And if thou
feel any thing therein suitable to the state and con-
dition of thy soul, oh, bow before the Lord, that in
the true humility thou mayest confess and give the
glory to him of what belongs to him.

From thy friend in the Truth, which cleanseth the
heart from iniquity, as it is embraced and dwelt in.

I. P.

23d of Tenth Month, 1668.