

# Worship

John Woolman



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John Woolman, American saint. Born 1720 at Northampton, New Jersey. A merchandiser, tailor, schoolmaster and lawyer, who cut down his business that he might see more clearly the simplicity of Truth. A humble and gentle Quaker, so set against every form of evil that he raised the most eloquent of voices against slavery and oppression. Author of Essays and a Journal which are among the classics of English prose and of inward seeking and finding.

He held himself responsible for the world's evil and he sought to clear his whole life of it, casting out self-will and pride, luxuries and other products of oppression. He visited the poor. He went to the homes of the well-off, pleading Truth and the plight of the poor and the enslaved. He travelled throughout the South, visited New England, and journeyed in times of disturbance among the Indians. He went to England to labor against the traffic in slaves and there died of smallpox in 1772.

Keeping of Negroes. 6, Journal 1756. 7, Journal 1755. 8, Journal 1756. 9, Journal 1764. 10 and 11, Journal 1764, continued. 12, Journal 1757. 13, Journal 1772.

**John Woolman sees Truth:** 1, Journal 1757. 2, Journal 1740. 3, 4 and 5, Journal 1740, continued. 6, Journal 1772. 7, 8, 9 and 10, Journal 1772, continued. 11, Some Expressions of John Woolman In his Last Illness. 12 and 13, Epistle 1772. 14 and 15, Epistle 1772, continued. 16 and 17, Epistle 1772, continued. 18, Remarks on Sundry Subjects.

**He is again brought low:** 1, 2 and 3, Journal 1757. 4 and 5, Journal 1760. 6, Journal 1767.

**He strives to speak not too much:** 1, Journal 1755. 2, Journal 1757. 3, Journal 1758. 4 and 5, Journal 1760. [24] 6, Journal 1760, continued. 7, Journal 1760. 8, Journal 1763.

**He foresees great troubles:** 1, Journal 1770. 2 and 3, Epistle 1759. 4, Epistle 1759, continued. 5, Some Expressions, etc. 6, Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes. 7, Some Considerations, etc.

**John Woolman describes true worship:** 1, Journal 1760. 2, Journal 1755. 3, Journal 1759. 4 through penultimate, Journal 1772, last entry. Ultimate, Some Expressions, etc.

For further study, readers are referred to Amelia Mott Gummere's, *John Woolman*, published by the Macmillan Co., to the Whittier Edition of the *Journal of John Woolman*, published by Houghton Mifflin and Company, and to Janet Whitney's new edition of the complete writings, shortly to be published by Henry Regnery.

from the gift, have kindled that hearers may speak highly of these labors. “And thus the false prophet in men may form likenesses, and his coming may be with signs and wonders and lying miracles; but the sorcerers, however powerful, remain without in company with the idolaters and adulterers.” That which is of God gathers to God; and that which is of the world is owned by the world.

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

I believe my being here is in the wisdom of Christ. I know not as to life or death.

### Sources

Numbers refer to paragraphs beginning in the section indicated. Dates refer to times when various parts of the Journal were written.

**Worship:** 1, Journal 1755. 2, A Plea for the Poor. 3, Journal 1770. 4, Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes.

**John Woolman is brought Low:** 1 and 2, Journal 1755. 3, Journal 1756. 4, Journal 1756, continued. 5 and 6, Journal 1772. 7 and 8, Journal 1772, continued. 9 and 10, Journal 1761.

**He does away with obstacles:** 1, Considerations on Pure Wisdom and Human Policy. 2, Journal 1755. 3, Journal 1761 and 1763. 4, Journal 1755. 5 and 6, Journal 1756. 7, A Plea for the Poor.

**He pushes aside the wisdom of the world:** 1 and 2, Epistle 1755. 3 and 4, Journal 1757. 5, Considerations on the

### Foreword

Out of John Woolman’s gentle love of Pure Wisdom and his hard struggle to hold to it there came writings which have ever since led men through darkness. These writings bring peace through disquiet. They put down, where it can be looked at, the growth in inward richness of a man who took upon himself the suffering of the world, felt responsibility for it, and set out to lose his life in the Light that illumines and alters it. Here such parts of his writings are collected as bear on the problem, “What is worship? How shall we have faith?”

This is not a spiritual guide book, not a conducted tour that passes through various set stages to get to some stage else. It is a record of that steady atmosphere, that constant state of being wherein one can find “the simplicity of Truth.” Finding, not searching, is its foundation; the saint himself is its keystone. For John Woolman is of the company of those whose response to God and to all creatures is warm and ever-ready, whose abandonment of worldly evil is unhesitating. Hating evil, John Woolman loved evil men and spoke to them with no bitterness. Loving the exaltation of Truth, he hid himself in humility. Denouncing the vanities and oppressions of the world, he spoke sweetly. And, like all the saints, he wrote words simply and beautifully, not out of man’s wisdom and learning, but out of the Inward Light of God’s spirit.

No collection of his words, of course, can show the entire John Woolman, the man of inward retirement who found a way of conquest over outward evil, the man who found that to love God is the mightiest of social weapons. He saw very sharply that each man breathes his inward thoughts into

the social atmosphere, and he proposed a radical remedy: let each man take responsibility for what he imagines, thinks, says, does. But at the center of these great discoveries was worship, the keen and awful sense of what it is to be close to God, the keen and stricken sense of what it is to be apart from Him. Worship to John Woolman was not simply a matter of First-day meditation and deportment; it was a matter of everyday speaking and thinking and living. It was not simply an act; it was a way, a condition, a means to Pure Wisdom. Thus when John Woolman worshipped he sought to keep every part of his being in humble readiness. He pushed away from every part of his life obstacles he found in his path. Turning his back on the world's wisdom, he kept loose from all that was not of God's spirit. Even after the most stirring openings of Truth, he sought refuge in lowliness. *And he said very little in public.* That a man should speak only through the operation of Inward Light is alone a message of very great point to moderns, who too often believe that talk reforms the world and that noise worships God.

All this, not any single part of it, was John Woolman's worship. This collection tries in brief compass to catch the kernel of it. Since it is intended for inward quickening, passages that fit together topically have been placed together without indication of deletions. Punctuation and capitalization have been modernized. Here, John Woolman is not to be studied as history. He is to be read and read again. From him it is impossible to stop learning.

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H.M.

danger of departing from the pure feeling of that which leadeth safely.

Christ knoweth the state of the people, and in the pure feeling of the gospel ministry their states are opened to his servants.

Christ knoweth when the fruitbearing branches themselves have need of purging.

O that these lessons may be remembered by me! and that all who appoint meetings may proceed in the pure feeling of duty!

I have sometimes felt a necessity to stand up; but that spirit which is of the world hath so much prevailed in many, and the pure life of Truth been so pressed down, that I have gone forward, not as one travelling in a road cast up and well prepared, but as a man walking through a miry place, in which are stones here and there, safe to step on, but so situated that one step being taken, time is necessary to see where to step next.

Now I find that in pure obedience the mind learns contentment in appearing weak and foolish to that wisdom which is of the world; and in these lowly labors they who stand in a low place, rightly exercised under the cross, will find nourishment.

The gift is pure; and while the eye is single in attending thereto, the understanding is preserved clear; self is kept out; and we rejoice in filling up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church.

The natural man loveth eloquence, and many love to hear eloquent orations, and if there is not a careful attention to the gift, men who have once labored in the pure gospel ministry, growing weary of suffering and ashamed of appearing weak, may kindle a fire, compass themselves about with sparks, and walk in the light – not of Christ, who is under suffering – but of that fire which they, going

I felt a concern in America to prepare for this voyage; and being through the mercy of God brought safe here, my heart was like a vessel that wanted vent; and for several weeks at first, when my mouth was opened at meetings, it often felt like the raising of a gate in a water course, where a weight of water lay upon it; and in those labors there appeared a fresh visitation of love to many, especially the youth. But some time after this, I felt empty and poor and yet felt a necessity to appoint meetings.

In this state I was exercised to abide in the pure life of Truth, and in all my own labors to watch diligently against the motions of self in my own mind.

I have frequently felt a necessity to stand up when the spring of the ministry was low, and to speak from necessity in that which subjecteth the will of the creature; and herein I was united with the suffering seed and found inward sweetness in these mortifying labors.

As I have been preserved in a watchful attention to the Divine Leader under these dispensations, enlargement at times hath followed, and the power of Truth hath rose higher in some meetings than I ever knew it before through me.

Thus I have been more and more instructed as to the necessity of depending, not upon a concern which I felt in America to come on a visit to England, but upon the fresh instructions of Christ from day to day.

Now of late, I have felt a stop in the appointing of meetings, not wholly but in part; and I do not feel liberty to appoint them so quick one after another as I have heretofore, and I feel thankful that I have not noise with me in these slow proceedings.

The work of the ministry being a work of Divine Love, I feel that the openings thereof are to be waited for in all our appointments.

O how deep is divine wisdom! Christ puts forth his ministers and goeth before them; and O how great is the

## Worship

I have often felt a motion of love to leave some hints of my experience of the goodness of God, and pursuant thereto I begin this work.

Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all his creatures. His tender mercies are over all his works, and so far as his love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship, and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

The place of prayer is a precious habitation, for I now saw that the prayers of the saints was precious incense; and a trumpet was given me that I might sound forth this language, that the children might hear it and be invited to gather to this precious habitation. I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world. The trumpet is sounded; the call goes forth to the church that she gather to the place of pure inward prayer; and her habitation is safe.

There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression. Using ourselves to take ways which appear

most easy to us, when inconsistent with that purity which is without beginning, we thereby set up a government of our own and deny obedience to him whose service is true liberty.

### John Woolman is brought low

I humbly prayed to the Lord for his help, that I might be delivered from those vanities which so ensnared me. Thus being brought low he helped me, and, as I learned to bear the cross, I felt refreshment to come from his presence. But not keeping in that strength which gave victory I lost ground again, the sense of which greatly afflicted me; and I sought deserts and lonely places, and there with tears did confess my sins to God and humbly craved help of him. And, I may say with reverence, he was near to me in my troubles and in those times of humiliation opened my ear to discipline.

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

We may see ourselves crippled and halting and, from a strong bias to things pleasant and easy, find an impossibility to advance forward. But things impossible with men are possible with God, and – our wills being made subject to his – all temptations are surmountable.

This work of subjecting the will is compared to the mineral in the furnace, which through fervent heat is reduced from its first principle. “He refines them as silver is refined; he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” By these comparisons we are instructed in the necessity of the melting operation of the hand of God upon us, to prepare our hearts truly to adore him and manifest that adoration

the hearts of sincere and upright men, though in their different growths they may not all have attained to the same clearness in some points. Wherein I was led to mention the integrity and constancy of many martyrs who gave their lives for the testimony of Jesus, and yet in some points held doctrines distinguishable from some which we hold. How that in all ages where people were faithful to the light and understanding which the Most High afforded them they found acceptance with him, and that now, though there are different ways of thinking amongst us in some particulars, yet if we mutually kept to that spirit and power which crucifies to the world, which teaches us to be content with things really needful and to avoid superfluities, giving up our hearts to fear and serve the Lord, true Unity may still be preserved amongst us. And that if such who at times were under sufferings on account of some scruples of conscience, kept low and humble and in their conduct of life manifested a spirit of true charity, it would be more likely to reach the witness in others and be of more service in the church, than if their sufferings were attended with a contrary spirit and conduct. In which exercise I was drawn into a sympathizing tenderness with the sheep of Christ, however distinguished one from another in this world, and the like disposition appeared to spread over some others in the meeting. Great is the goodness of the Lord toward us, his poor creatures.

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

Christ being the Prince of Peace, and we being no more than ministers, I find it necessary for us not only to feel a concern for our first going forth, but to experience the renewing thereof in the appointing of meetings.

melting influence of it, finds a path unknown to many and sees the necessity to lean upon the arm of divine strength and dwell alone or with a few in the right, committing their cause to him who is a refuge for his people in all their troubles.

Rejoice ever more, and in everything give thanks. (This is sometimes hard to come at.)

### John Woolman describes true worship

I feel my mind resigned to exercise that gift which the Lord hath bestowed upon me, which though small compared with some, yet in this I rejoice, that I feel love unfeigned towards my fellow-creatures.

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

My mind was drawn into a deep inward stillness, and, being at times covered with the spirit of supplication, my heart was secretly poured out before the Lord. Near the conclusion of the meeting I felt an increasing exercise to speak, and way opened that in the pure flowing of divine love I expressed what lay upon me: which as it then arose in my mind was first to show how *deep* answers to *deep* in

by inwardly turning away from that spirit in all its workings which is not of him. To forward this work the all-wise God is sometimes pleased, through outward distress, to bring us near the gates of death: that life being painful and afflicting and the prospect of eternity open before us, all earthly bonds may be loosened and the mind prepared for that deep and sacred instruction which otherwise would not be received.

The love of God is manifested in graciously calling us to come out of that which stands in confusion, but if we give not up those prospects of gain which in the wisdom of the world are open before us, but say in our hearts, "I must needs go on, and in going on I hope to keep as near to the purity of Truth as the business before me will admit of" – here the mind remains entangled and the shining of the Light of Life into the soul is obstructed. In the love of money and the wisdom of this world business is proposed; then the urgency of affairs push forward; nor can the mind in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us.

Surely the Lord calls to mourning and deep humiliation that in his fear we may be instructed and led safely on through the great difficulties and perplexities in this present age. In an entire subjection of our wills the Lord graciously opens a way for his people, where all their wants are bounded by his wisdom.

As death comes on our own wills and a new life is formed in us, the heart is purified and prepared to understand clearly, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In purity of heart the mind is divinely opened to behold the nature of Universal Righteousness, or the righteousness of the kingdom of God.

The natural mind is active about the things of this life, and in this natural activity business is proposed and a will in us to go forward in it. And as long as this natural will

remains unsubjected, so long there remains an obstruction against the clearness of divine light operating in us. But when we love God with all our heart and with all our strength, then in this love we love our neighbors as ourselves, and a tenderness of heart is felt toward all people.

From my early acquaintance with Truth I have often felt an inward distress occasioned by the striving of a spirit in me against the operation of the heavenly principle, and in this circumstance have been affected with a sense of my own wretchedness, and in a mourning condition felt earnest longing for that divine help which brings the soul into true liberty. Retiring into private places, the spirit of supplication hath been given me, and under a heavenly covering I have asked my gracious Father to give me a heart in all things resigned to the direction of his wisdom.

I have seen – and the sight has affected me – that a conformity to some customs distinguishable from Pure Wisdom has entangled many, and the desire of gain to support those customs greatly opposed the work of Truth. And sometimes, when the prospect of the work before me has been such that in bowedness of spirit I have been drawn into retired places and besought the Lord with tears that he would take me wholly under his direction and show me the way in which I ought to walk, it hath revived with strength of conviction that if I would be his faithful servant I must in all things attend to his wisdom and be teachable, and so cease from all customs contrary thereto, however used amongst religious people.

### He does away with obstacles

My mind hath often been affected with sorrow on account of the prevailing of that spirit which leads from an humble waiting on the inward teaching of Christ, to pursue

and feel that a wrong spirit is spreading among the inhabitants of our country; that the hearts of many are waxed fat and their ears dull of hearing; that the Most High, in his visitations to us, instead of calling, he lifteth up his voice and crieth; he crieth to our country, and his voice waxeth louder and louder.

Let us not forget that “the Most High hath his way in the deep, in clouds and in thick darkness” – that it is his voice which crieth to the city and to the country. And O that these loud and awakening cries may have a proper effect upon us, that heavier chastisement may not become necessary! For though things, as to the outward, may for a short time afford a pleasing prospect; yet while a selfish spirit that is not subject to the cross of Christ continueth to spread and prevail, there can be no long continuance in outward peace and tranquility. If we desire an inheritance incorruptible, and to be at rest in that state of peace and happiness which ever continues; if we desire in this life to dwell under the favor and protection of that Almighty Being whose habitation is in holiness, whose ways are all equal, and whose anger is now kindled because of our backslidings; let us then awfully regard these beginnings of his sore judgments, and with abasement and humiliation turn to him whom we have offended.

My soul is poured out unto thee like water, and my bones are out of joint. I saw a vision in which I beheld the great confusion of those that depart from thee. I saw their horror and great distress. I was made sensible of their misery; then was I greatly distressed. I looked unto thee; thou wast underneath and supported me. I likewise saw the great calamity that is coming upon this disobedient nation.

From one age to another, the gloom grows thicker and darker, till error gets established by general opinion, so that whoever attends to perfect goodness and remains under the

equal regard to all mankind. And here luxury and covetousness, with the numerous oppressions and other evils attending them, appeared very afflicting to me, and I felt in that which is immutable that the seeds of great calamity and desolation are sown and growing fast on this continent.

### He foresees great troubles

I have seen in the Light of the Lord that the day is approaching when the man that is the most wise in human policies shall be the greatest fool, and the arm that is mighty to support injustice shall be broken to pieces. The enemies of righteousness shall make a terrible rattle and shall mightily torment one another. For he that is omnipotent is rising up to judgment and will plead the cause of the oppressed; and he commanded me to open the vision.

The dealings of God with mankind in a national capacity do sufficiently evidence the truth of that saying, "It is righteousness which exalteth a nation." And though he doth not at all times suddenly execute his judgments on a sinful people in this life, yet we see by many instances that where "men follow lying vanities, they forsake their own mercies." And as a proud, selfish spirit prevails and spreads among a people, so partial judgment, oppression, discord, envy and confusions increase; and provinces and kingdoms are made to drink the cup of adversity as a reward of their own doings. Thus the inspired prophet saith, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts."

People who look chiefly at things outward too little consider the original cause of the present troubles; but such who fear the Lord and think often upon his name, they see

ways of living attended with unnecessary labor; and which draws forth the minds of many people to seek after outward power and to strive for riches, which frequently introduce oppression and bring forth wars.

I had many fresh and heavenly openings in respect to the care and providence of the Almighty over his creatures in general and over man as the most noble amongst those which are visible, and being clearly convinced in my judgment that to place my whole trust in God was best for me, I felt renewed engagements that in all things I might act on an inward principle of virtue and pursue worldly business no further than as Truth opened my way therein.

A query at times hath arisen: do I in all my proceedings keep to that use of things which is agreeable to Universal Righteousness? And then there hath some degree of sadness at times come over me, for that I accustomed myself to some things which occasioned more labor than I believe Divine Wisdom intended for us. And here I was led into a close, laborious inquiry: whether I as an individual kept clear from all things which tended to stir up or were connected with wars, and my heart was deeply concerned that in the future I might live and walk in the plainness and simplicity of a sincere follower of Christ.

My mind, through the power of Truth, was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly; so that a way of life free from much entanglement appeared best for me, though the income was small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable but saw not my way clear to accept of them, as believing the business proposed would be attended with more outward care and cumber than was required of me to engage in. I saw that a humble man, with the blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success

in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth the desire for wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time as to things outward that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the true Shepherd.

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

The increase of business became my burden, for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed Truth required me to live more free from outward cumberers. There was now a strife in my mind betwixt the two, and in this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will. I then lessened my outward business and, as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intention that they might consider what shop to turn to; and so in a while wholly laid down merchandise.

O that we who declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and therein examine our foundations and motives in holding great estates. May we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions or not. Holding treasures in the self-pleasing spirit is a strong plant, the fruit whereof ripens fast.

disqualified by a superficial friendship, and as the sense thereof hath abased me and my cries have been to the Lord, so I have been humbled and made content to appear weak or as a fool for his sake; and thus a door hath opened to enter upon it.

To attempt to do the Lord's work in our own will, and to speak of that which is the burden of the Word in a way easy to the natural part, does not reach the bottom of the disorder. To see the failings of our friends and think hard of them without opening that which we ought to open, and still carry a face of friendship – this tends to undermine the foundation of true unity.

In the heat of zeal I once made reply to what an ancient Friend said, which when I sat down I saw that my words were not enough seasoned with charity. And after this I spake no more on the subject. I, remaining uneasy with the manner of my speaking, could not see my way clear to conceal my uneasiness, but was concerned that I might say nothing to weaken the cause in which I had labored. And then after some repentance for that I had not attended closely to the safe guide, I stood up and acquainted Friends that though I dared not go from what I had said as to the matter, yet I was uneasy with the manner of my speaking, as believing milder language would have been better.

My own will and desire being now very much broken, a weighty and heavenly care came over my mind, and love filled my heart toward all mankind, in which I felt a strong engagement that we might be faithful to the Lord while his mercies are yet extended to us, and so attend to pure Universal Righteousness. I did greatly bewail the spreading of a wrong spirit, believing that a prosperous convenient situation requires a constant attention to divine love and wisdom, to guide and support us in a way answerable to the will of that good, gracious and almighty Being who hath an

taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

I sat a considerable time in much weakness, till at length I felt Truth open the way to speak a little in much plainness and simplicity.

If selfish views or party spirit have any room in our minds, we are unfit for the Lord's work. If we have a clear prospect of the business and proper weight on our minds to speak, it behooves us to avoid useless apologies and repetitions. Where people are gathered from far and adjourning a meeting is attended with great difficulty, it behooves all to be cautious how they detain a meeting. In three hundred minutes are five hours, and he that improperly detains three hundred people one minute in a meeting, besides other evils that attend it, does an injury like that of imprisoning one man five hours without cause.

It was my concern from day to day to say no more nor less than what the spirit of Truth opened in me, being jealous over myself lest I should speak any thing to make my testimony look agreeable to that mind in people which is not in pure obedience to the cross of Christ.

Thou who sometimes travels in the work of the ministry and art made very welcome by thy friends seest many tokens of their satisfaction in having thee for their guest. It is good for thee to dwell deep that thou mayest feel and understand the spirits of people. If we believe Truth points towards a conference of some subjects in a private way, it is needful for us to take heed that their kindness, their freedom and affability do not hinder us from the Lord's work. I have seen that in the midst of kindness and smooth conduct to speak close and home to them who entertain us, on points that relate to their outward interest, is hard labor; and sometimes when I have felt Truth lead toward it, I have found myself

### He pushes aside the wisdom of the world

With respect to the commotions and stirrings of the powers of the earth at this time near us, we are desirous that none of us may be moved thereat, "but repose ourselves in the munition of that rock that all these shakings shall not move." The worldly part in any is the changeable part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and sorrowful as things go well or ill in this world. For as the Truth is but one and many are made partakers of its spirit, so the world is but one and many are made partakers of the spirit of it. And so many as do partake of it, so many will be straitened and perplexed with it. But they who are "single to the Truth, waiting daily to feel the life and virtue of it in their hearts, these shall rejoice in the midst of adversity."

If, contrary to this, we profess the Truth and, not living under the power and influence of it, are producing fruits disagreeable to the purity thereof, and trust to the strength of man to support ourselves therein, our confidence will be vain; for he who removed the hedge from his vineyard and gave it to be trodden under foot by reason of the wild grapes it produced remains unchangeable. And if, for the chastisement of wickedness and the further promoting his own glory, he doth arise even to shake terribly the earth, who then may oppose him and prosper!

The sense I had of the state of the churches brought a weight of distress upon me. The gold to me appeared dim and the fine gold changed, and though this is the case too generally, yet the sense of it in these parts hath in a particular manner borne heavy upon me. It appeared to me that through the prevailing of the spirit of this world the minds of many were brought into an inward desolation, and instead of the spirit of meekness, gentleness and heavenly wisdom – which are the necessary companions of a true sheep of Christ – a spirit of fierceness and the love of dominion too generally prevailed.

From small beginnings in error great buildings by degrees are raised, and from one age to another are more and more strengthened by the general concurrence of the people. And as men of reputation depart from the Truth, their virtues are mentioned as arguments in favor of general error; and those of less note to justify themselves say, "Such and such good men did the like." He who professeth to believe one Almighty Creator and in his son Jesus Christ, and is yet more intent on the honors, profits and friendships of the world than he is in singleness of heart to stand faithful to the Christian religion, is in the channel of idolatry: while the gentile, who under some mistaken opinions is notwithstanding established in the true principle of virtue and humbly adores an Almighty Power, may be of that number who fear God and work righteousness.

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

Tradesmen and retailers of goods, who depend on their business for a livelihood, are naturally inclined to keep the good will of their customers; nor is it a pleasant thing for young men to be under any necessity to question the judgment or honesty of elderly men, and such more especially who have a good character. Deep-rooted customs, though wrong, are not easily altered, but it is the duty of

was resigned to the will of God, often querying with myself what should be the cause of such inward poverty and weakness, greatly desiring that no secret reserve in my heart might hinder my access to the divine fountain. In these humbling times I was made watchful and attentive to the deep movings of the spirit of Truth on my heart, and here some duties were opened to me which in times of fullness I believed I should have been in danger of omitting.

The next day was a general meeting for worship, much crowded, in which I was deeply engaged in inward cries to the Lord for help, that I might stand wholly resigned and move only as he might be pleased to lead me.

#### He strives to speak not too much

I went to meetings in an awful frame of mind and endeavored to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the True Shepherd. And one day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting, but not keeping close to the divine opening, I said more than was required of me, and, being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could take satisfaction in nothing. I remembered God and was troubled, and in the depth of my distress he had pity upon me. I then felt forgiveness for my offense, and my mind became calm and quiet, being truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies. And after this, feeling the spring of divine love opened and a concern to speak, I said a few words in meeting in which I found peace: this, I believe, was about six weeks from the first time; and as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure spirit, which inwardly moves upon the heart and which

shepherd. Here the best of teachers ministers to the several conditions of his flock, and the soul receives immediately from the divine fountain that with which it is nourished. In real silent worship the soul feeds on that which is divine, but we cannot partake of the table of the Lord *and* that table which is prepared by the god of this world. If Christ is our shepherd and feedeth us, and we are faithful in following him, our lives will have an inviting language and the table of the Lord will not be polluted.

### He is again brought low

I felt sorrow of heart, and my tears were poured out before the Lord, who was pleased to afford a degree of strength...

I have been much under sorrow, which of late so increased upon me, that my mind was almost overwhelmed, and I may say with the psalmist, "In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried to my God," who, in infinite goodness, looked upon my afflictions and in my private retirement sent the Comforter for my relief...

It was a time of inward suffering, but through the goodness of the Lord I was made content. Though our way may be difficult and require close attention to keep in it, and though the manner in which we are led may tend to our own abasement, yet if we continue in patience and meekness, heavenly peace is the reward of our labors....

The spring of the ministry was often low, and through the subjecting power of Truth we were kept low with it. It was in general a time of abasement of the creature....

The poverty of spirit which so much attended me has of late appeared to me as a dispensation of kindness. Appointing meetings never felt more weighty to me, and I was led into a deep search whether in all cases my mind

every man to be firm in that which he certainly knows is right for him.

I find that to be a fool as to worldly wisdom and commit my cause to God, not fearing to offend men who take offense at the simplicity of Truth, is the only way to remain unmoved at the sentiments of others.

Doth pride lead to vanity? Doth vanity form imaginary wants? Do these wants prompt men to exert their power in requiring that of others which themselves would rather be excused from, were the same required of them? Do those proceedings beget hard thoughts? Do hard thoughts, when ripe, become malice? Does malice, when ripe, become revengeful, and in the end inflict terrible pains on their fellow creatures and spread desolations in the world?

Doth mankind, walking in uprightness, delight in each other's happiness? And do these creatures, capable of this attainment, by giving way to an evil spirit employ their wit and strength to afflict and destroy one another? Remember then, O my soul, the quietude of those in whom Christ governs and in all thy proceedings feel after it.

Doth he condescend to bless thee with his presence, to move and influence to action? To dwell in thee and walk with thee? Remember then thy station as a being sacred to God. Accept of the strength freely offered thee, and take heed that no weakness in conforming to expensive, unwise and hardhearted customs, gendering to discord and strife, be given way to. Remember, O my soul, that the Prince of Peace is thy Lord, that he communicates his Pure Wisdom to his family that they, living in perfect simplicity, may give no just cause of offense to any creature, but may walk as he walked.

Dwell in humility and take heed that no views of outward gain get too deep hold of you, that so your eyes being single to the Lord, you may be preserved in the way of

safety. Where people let loose their minds after the love of outward things and are more engaged in pursuing the profits and seeking the friendship of this world than to be inwardly acquainted with the way of true peace – such walk in a vain shadow while the true comfort of life is wanting. But where people are sincerely devoted to follow Christ and dwell under the influence of his Holy Spirit, their stability and firmness, through a divine blessing, is at times like dew on the tender plants round about them, and the weightiness of their spirits secretly works on the minds of others.

I have felt a renewed confirmation that the Lord, in his infinite love, is calling to his visited children so to give up all outward possessions and means of getting treasures that his Holy Spirit may have free course in their hearts and direct them in all their proceedings.

### John Woolman sees Truth

Being in good health and abroad visiting families, I lodged at a Friend's house in Burlington, and going to bed about the time usual with me, I awoke in the night, and my meditations as I lay were on the goodness and mercy of the Lord, in a sense whereof my heart was contrite. After this I went to sleep again and, sleeping a short time, I awoke. It was yet dark and no appearance of day nor moonshine, and as I opened my eyes I saw a light in the chamber at the apparent distance of five feet, about nine inches diameter, of a clear easy brightness and near the center the most radiant. As I lay still without any surprise looking upon it, words were spoken to my inward ear which filled my whole inward man. They were not the effect of thought nor any conclusion in relation to the appearance, but as the language of the Holy One spoken in my mind. The words were CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DIVINE TRUTH and were again

church, is of the greatest consequence to be observed. Now in this stop I have learned the necessity of waiting on the Lord in humility, that the works of all may be brought to the Light, and those brought to judgment which are wrought in the wisdom of this world – and have seen that in a mind thoroughly subjected to the power of the cross there is a savor of life which may be felt, and which evidently tends to gather souls to God, while the greatest works in the visible gathered church, brought forth in man's wisdom, remain to be unprofitable.

I trust there are many who at times, under Divine visitation, feel an inward inquiry after God. And when such in the simplicity of their hearts mark the lives of a people who profess to walk by the leadings of his Spirit, of what great concernment is it that our lights shine clear.

In entering into that life which is hid with Christ in God, we behold the peaceable government of Christ, where the whole family are governed by the same spirit and, doing to others as we would they should do unto us, groweth up as good fruit from a good tree. The peace, the quietness and harmonious walking in this government is beheld with humble reverence to him who is the author of it, and in partaking of the Spirit of Christ we partake of that which labors and suffers for the increase of this peaceable government amongst the inhabitants of the world. And I have felt a labor of long continuance that we who profess this peaceable principle may be faithful standard-bearers under the Prince of Peace, and that nothing of a defiling nature tending to discord and wars may remain amongst us.

Worship in silence hath often been refreshing to my mind, and a care attends me that a young generation may feel the nature of this worship. In pure silent worship, we dwell under the holy anointing, and feel Christ to be our

The necessity of an inward stillness hath under these exercises appeared clear to my mind. In true silence strength is renewed, the mind herein is weaned from all things but as they may be enjoyed in the Divine Will; and a lowliness in outward living, opposite to worldly honor, becomes truly acceptable to us. In the desire of outward gain the mind is prevented from a perfect attention to the voice of Christ; but in the weaning of the mind from all things but as they may be enjoyed in the Divine Will, the pure Light shines into the soul. And where the fruits of that spirit which is of the world are brought forth by many who profess to be led by the spirit of Truth, and cloudiness is felt to be gathering over the visible gathered church, the sincere in heart – who abide in true stillness – have a knowledge of Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings, and inward thankfulness is felt at times that through divine love our own wisdom is cast out.

While aught remains in us different from a perfect resignation of our wills, it is like a seal to a book wherein is written that good and acceptable and perfect will of God concerning us. But when our minds entirely yield to Christ, that silence is known which followeth the opening of the last of the seals. In this silence we learn a patient abiding in the Divine Will, and there feel that we have no cause to promote but that only in which the Light of Life directs us in our proceedings, and that the only way to be useful in the church of Christ is to abide faithfully under the leadings of his Holy Spirit in all cases.

I have seen that to be active and busy in the visible gathered church without the leadings of the Holy Spirit is not only unprofitable but tends to increase dimness. And where way is not opened to proceed in the light of Truth, a stop is felt by those who humbly attend to the Divine leader: a stop which, in relation to good order in the visible gathered

repeated exactly in the same manner, whereupon the light disappeared.

I was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learn to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men, but also toward the brute creatures. That as the mind was moved by an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, by the same principle it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world. That as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal and sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time to exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life or by life derived from him was a contradiction in itself.

I found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions, but believe that sincere uprighthearted people in every society who truly love God were accepted of him.

As I lived under the cross and simply followed the openings of Truth, my mind from day to day was more enlightened. While I silently ponder on that change that was wrought in me, I find no language equal to it, nor any means to convey to another a clear idea of it. I looked upon the works of God in this visible creation, and an awfulness covered me. My heart was tender and often contrite, and a universal love to my fellow creatures increased in me. This will be understood by such who have trodden in the same path.

Some glances of real beauty is perceivable in their faces who dwell in true meekness. Some tincture of true harmony in the sound of that voice to which Divine Love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct whose passions are fully regulated. Yet all these do not fully show forth that inward life to such who have not felt it.

In a time of sickness with the pleurisy I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy color between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed in with them, and henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any voice I had heard with my ears before, and I believed it was the voice of an angel who spake to the other angels. The words were, JOHN WOOLMAN IS DEAD. I soon remembered that I once was John Woolman and, being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean.

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

All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery, and in the morning, my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was. And they, telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was only lightheaded, for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to any one. My tongue was often so dry that I could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture; and as I lay still for a time, at length I felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then I said, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me;

and the life I now live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

Then the mystery was opened and I perceived that there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language, JOHN WOOLMAN IS DEAD, meant no more than the death of my own will.

After this sickness I spake not in public meetings for worship for near one year, but my mind was very often in company with the oppressed as I sat in meetings, and it was to me a time of abundance of weeping.

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

To unite in worship is a union in prayer, and prayer acceptable to the Father is only in a mind truly sanctified, where the sacred name taken on us is kept holy and the heart resigned to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven. Now we do not know what to pray for as we ought. But as the Holy Spirit doth open and direct our minds and as we faithfully yield to it, our prayers unite with the will of our heavenly Father, who fails not to grant that which his own spirit, through his children, asketh.