



A MEMOIR  
ON THE LIVES OF  
MARY AND ISAAC PENINGTON

Site Editor's Preface

Isaac Penington was described by George Fox as "some years before his death, the Lord, in and with his power, set him free from; and gave him dominion over all." William Penn also echoes the same information. I rarely see this testimony of certainty for the early Quakers. So it is with confidence that many of Penington's extensive writings are placed on this site, as they particularly speak to the individual's necessity of receiving Christ the Light in the heart, receiving his conviction of sin, receiving his stroke against it, becoming a new creature, feeling the springs of life bubbling from the heart,

reading the Scriptures in the heart, and seeing your blessed savior in your heart. No other man writes as Penington writes; he is a noble worthy of the Lord. His blessed wife, Mary, also has a wonderful story within this memoir. I pray you will be inspired to continue on the cross, forsaking all the world, so you too can experience of what Isaac Penington so ably relates to us. The text for this Memoir was taken from two sources - *Memoirs of the Life of Isaac Penington* by William Grover and the *Penns' and Peningtons'* by Maria Webb. Penn's below introduction, comes from *The Letters of Isaac Penington*, John Barcay, Edt.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Testimony of* William Penn concerning Isaac Penington -

As 'the memory of the just is blessed,' so to me there seems a blessing upon those, that have a right memory of them; therefore, to the memory of this just man, my dear Friend and father-in-law, Isaac Penington, I do, with a sincere and religious affection, dedicate this enduing testimony.

He was well descended as to his worldly parentage and born about the year 1617, being heir to a fair inheritance; his education was suitable to his quality among men, having all the advantages the schools and universities of his own country could give, joined with the conversation of some of the most knowing and considerable men of that time. His natural abilities, the gifts of his Creator, excelled; he was a man quick in apprehension, fruitful in conception, of a lively wit and intelligence,

but adorned with an extraordinary mildness and engaging sweetness of disposition.

His father's station in public business, gave him pretensions enough to a share of this world's greatness; but he, with blessed meek spirit of Moses, refused the Egyptian glory of it, and chose rather a life dedicated to an inquiry after God, and holy fellowship with him and his despised Israel. He was the eldest son of Isaac Penington Sr., of London, many years an Alderman, and for two years successively Mayor of the London, also a noted Member of the Long Parliament.

Very early did the Lord visit him, with more than ordinary manifestations of His love; and it had such an effect upon him, that it kept him both from the evils and vain worships of the world; he became the wonder of his kindred and familiars. for his awful life and serious frequent retirements, declining all company that might interrupt his meditations. By thus giving himself over to a life of mourning and pilgrimage, he was as unpleasant to those of the world, as they were to him. Nor did this sorrow flow from a sense of former vice, for he was virtuous from his childhood; but, with holy Habakkuk from the dread he had of the majesty of God, and his desire to find a resting place in the great day of trouble. Nothing in these exercises gave him ease or comfort, but the smiles of God's countenance upon his soul, and *that* he thirsted after with a continual solicitation; first: 'How shall I appear?' and then, 'Oh that I may appear before God!'

His inward exercises and enjoyments being of a very peculiar nature, made him take little comfort in any of the religious societies then known to Him. He was as one alone; for he saw so much of that uncircumcised and uncrucified flesh, which is as grass, professing the

mysteries of the heavenly kingdom; - I mean, people under but ordinary convictions, who had never known Jacob's troubles, nor the fear and trembling with which salvation is to be wrought out; - and that, in religious duties, the spirit and abilities of man took up so great a share among them, and the Spirit of the Lord so little, With such he was often burdened, and pressed in spirit to lay open their carnal state under a Christian profession. For, though they held the notions of Truth, it was not in the precious experimental sense of the holy virtue and life of it; insomuch, that he found it his duty to endeavor to break their false peace, and bewilder their lofty wisdom and professions rather approving of a state of humble doubting, than hypocritical confidence. For, the Lord's coming in spirit, without sin, to the salvation of the soul, is to be waited for; that people may truly know him and his work, and, *from* there, speak forth his praise to others; rather than profess the enjoyments of *other* saints, which have been obtained through great tribulations, while they have never known this in themselves and so, can have no true sense of an acceptable sacrifice of God's preparing.

Such views drew reproach upon him from the worldly professors, all a man singular and censorious; yet. those who with him waited for the consolation of Israel, and the coming of the Son of man in power and great glory, found him out, valued, and honored him; and, sweet was *their* fellowship to him, who boasted in nothing more, than that they had nothing to boast of. while the Laodicea of their age thought she wanted nothing. In that emptiness, they waited to be filled of Him, who fills all things at his coming and kingdom, that they might be the witnesses of his resurrection and appearance. Some of them died before that blessed time came; some saw it, and were glad, and with

good old Simeon departed in peace; others lived to see that blessed day both dawn and break forth upon them, to their admiration and comfort; among whom, my dear father-in-law, Isaac Penington, was not the last, nor the least of note.

About the year 1657, it pleased the Lord to send him a Peter, [George Fox] to declare to him, that a time of pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, and breaking forth of a heavenly work of God in the souls of men and women, had come; and many Aquilas and Priscillas came after, who instructed him in the way of God more perfectly. Though he was advanced above many in his knowledge of Scripture, and had formerly received many heavenly openings of Truth's mysteries; yet, did the Lord's, way of appearance disappoint his expectation. And when the light broke forth in his heart, which his sincerity longed for, he found in himself a great mixture; and that he had much to lose and part with, before he could become that blessed little child, that new and heavenly birth, which inherits the kingdom of God: this, indeed, made him cry. 'Narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leads to life.'

But, to the glory of the living God, and praise of this just man's memory, let me say, - neither his worldly station, (the most considerable of any, that had closed in with his way of religion), nor the contradictions it gave to his former conceptions, nor the debasement it brought upon his learning and wisdom, nor yet that reproach and loss which attended his public espousal of it, did deter him from embracing it. With an humble and broken spirit, he fell before this holy appearance of Jesus, - that true Light of men, whose power and life he felt revealed within him, to the saving of his soul, and boldly confessed this spiritual coming of the great Messiah, who

was able to teach him all things; to His name his knee truly bowed, and with Nathaniel he could cry, 'You are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel' Now, he saw clearly between the precious and the vile in himself, between what was truly *of God*, in his former exercises, and what was merely *of man*. He was not stiff nor stout in defense of his own building, and former apprehensions; no, but sold all for the 'pearl of great price,' and became willingly 'poor in spirit,' that he might enter 'the kingdom of God.' Thus, parting with all he had not received of God, he received a new stock from heaven, in which the Lord prospered him; the dew of heaven rested upon his branch and root, he grew rich and fruitful in all heavenly treasure; full of love, faith, mercy, patience, and long-suffering; diligent in the work of the Lord, and his duty to God and men. So much that, I may say, he was one of a thousand; zealous, yet tender; wise, yet humble; a constant and early attendant at meetings, watchful and reverent in them; one that ever loved *power* and *life*, more than *word*; and, as it was for *that* he waited, so would he be often deeply affected with it, - even, enabled to utter such testimonies, as were greatly to the help of the poor and needy, the weary and heavy-laden, the true sojourners and travelers to eternal rest. To this, his writings as well as ministry tended; in which, it will be easy for the reader to observe, his peculiar and mighty love to the great professors of religion in these kingdoms; whom carnal apprehensions or unjust prejudices, have hindered from closing with the blessed Truth, as it is known and felt amongst us. His fervent labor to remove these obstructions was with such tenderness, yet great clearness, that I may venture to style him their apostle; for, as in almost every meeting, so in every book, the bent of his spirit was towards them: - that those who made a more than ordinary profession of God, - not without some ancient touches of the divine grace, and

experience of his heavenly visitation, (though much extinguished by human and worldly mixtures) - might come to know what *that* was they once lasted of, how they lost it; and which is the way to recover the living and full enjoyment of it, - even, the inward knockings and appearance of Jesus, the Saviour, to the salvation of their souls. I pray God, they may answer his love: for, he was much spent on their account; that so his ministry, writings, travels, and tears, may not be matter of charge and evidence against them in the day of judgment.

As his outward man grew in age, his inward man grew in grace, and in the knowledge of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the excellence of which, he had justly counted all things else but as dross and dung. For it was observable, among them that rightly knew him in his declining time, when the candle of his natural life burnt more dim, his soul waxed stronger, and, like a replenished lamp, shined with greater luster; and truly, he had a double portion of the Spirit upon him, being anointed with judgment and zeal for the Lord, which appeared in two eminent respects.

First, he was very urgent, that all those who knew any thing of the heavenly gift of ministry to others, would always wait in their several exercises, to be endued with matter and power from on high, before they opened their mouths in a testimony for the Lord. And did, at all times, as well out of meetings as in them, they might live so Dear the Lord, as to feel the key of David opening the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom; and, by experiencing the depth of the heavenly travail, and the trials, deliverances, and consolations of it,- with that dominion and victory that, in the end, by perseverance is obtained, - they might be as true saviors on mount Zion, the salt and lights of the world, thoroughly

furnished unto every good word and work, and master builders in God's house : - that a pure and living stream of ministry, might be continued and conveyed to the generations to come, - that *they* might not only hear, but taste of what we have known of the Word of life and work of redemption in our age.

But, his excellence in the second respect, was his fervent love to the heavenly union of brethren; whatever struck at that, though under ever such specious pretences, he no sooner perceived, however subtle the mischievous working thereof, than with deep wisdom he detected, and with his whole might opposed it. For, though by nature he was long suffering, to a degree of letting his mercy to others, almost wound his own soul; yet, so deeply did his love to the Lord and his people, and to that comely order in which God had settled them, engage his soul; that he was bold as a lion, Yes, warlike as a champion against that spirit, that went up and down to sow jealousies, to smite and reflect upon the holy care of the brethren, interpreting their tender love and great pains, as if what was done by them were not intended for the edification of the body, but for the exaltation of some particular person over it. This ingratitude and injustice his soul abhorred, and often he mourned for such as were so seduced; as if it were the design of those that had from the beginning laid themselves out in the service of God and his people, to bring them at last to a blind and unwarrantable subjection, that they themselves might the better exercise dominion over them, This evil eye he helped to put out; and, in his opposition to this wandering and destroying spirit, that ever leads out of the love and unity of brethren, he approved himself a valiant of Israel, a Phinehas for the God of his salvation ; - and the rewards of heaven were poured into his bosom; for his holy ministry manifestly increased

in life and power, and his peace flowed as a river, and many were witnesses of his enlargements. Let those that have lost their first love, and are gone from their ancient habitation, 'rage, and imagine vain things,' if they will; surely, the travail, and testimonies of this blessed man will be a witness against them, that will not easily be silenced, and a burden upon their backs. that will not readily be taken off. Yet, because he desired not their destruction, but prayed earnestly to the last for their return, let me not while I am writing his character, fall short of his compassions: no, I pray God also, with my whole spirit, that they may repent, be contrite in heart, and faithfully return, at which, if the angels in heaven rejoice, certainly the spirits of the just, that dwell in heavenly places, will abundantly rejoice too.

These two cares were chiefly and almost continually before him. And as he was, in these respects, a light in the church, so he was a blessing to his own family; a loving husband, a very tender and prudent father, a just and kind master, - I will and, a good neighbor, and a most firm friend: of all unapt to believe ill, never to report it, much less to do it to any; a man that ruled his tongue, swift to hear, slow to speak; but when he did speak, he was serious, yet sweet, and not without cheer. What shall I say more? For, great and many were the gifts God honored him with, and with them he truly honored his profession.

Being thus fit to live, he was prepared to die, and had nothing else to do, when that summons was served upon him, which was in the 63rd year of his age; at which time, it pleased the Lord, he fell very sick, under a sharp and painful sickness, which hastened his dissolution. However, to internal peace so well established, the anguish of that bitter exercise could give no shock; for he died, as he lived, in the faith

that overcomes the world; whose soul, being now released from the confinements of time and frailties of mortality, he ascended into the glorious freedom and undisturbed joys of the just; where, with his holy brethren, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs of Jesus, he forever blesses and praises the God and Father of the righteous generations by Jesus Christ, God's Lamb, and our heavenly Redeemer - to whom with the Father be all honor, glory, might, majesty, and dominion, through every age of his church, and forever. Amen.

WILLIAM PENN

Westminster, 12th of Twelfth Month, 1680-81.

## Chapter I

### **General Background**

ISAAC Penington was born about the year 1616, heir, to use the words of his son-in-law William Penn, to a fair inheritance. (Penn had married Gulielma Maria Springett, daughter of Isaac Penington's wife by a former husband). It would be gratifying to trace the steps of the childhood of a man, in whom the simplicity of the child so long survived the weakness; but until further search can be made, it must suffice to learn from the same author, that his education was suitable to his quality among men, and that he had all the advantages that the schools and universities of his own country could bestow; as well as such all arose from the conversation of some of the most knowing and considerable men of the time. He arrived at manhood at a period when

England was agitated with the tempest of civil commotion, by means of the discord between Charles and his parliament; and all the father of Penington was himself a violent partisan. The son, had his temper inclined him to enter the lists, might probably soon have arisen to eminence in the republic. But he seems early to have set his mind on another contest than the one for worldly power; and to have chosen a life dedicated to an inquiry after God, and a holy fellowship with his despised people. He chose, he sought, he strove, and he obtained; but had his choice been to follow the path into which his father had entered, disappointment would meet likely have been the ultimate consequence.

The elder Penington had been chief magistrate of the metropolis, he had raised the forces of the city to join the parliament's army, he had been entrusted with the charge of the Tower, and had been one of the council of state; but the Restoration reversed the condition of public affairs, and he died a prisoner in the fortress which he had formerly commanded. But though Isaac Penington forbore to enter into the contests which rent the nation, he was far from being an unconcerned spectator of the misery of his country. In this some of the tracts which he published long before he joined the Society of Friends, bear ample testimony. But he looked for the cause of the evil rather in the depraved state of man's heart in general, than in any particular party or set of men.

When his son Isaac Penington, Jr. was twenty-two years of age, we may conceive what opportunities for worldly aggrandizement the intervening twenty years, from 1638 to 1658, must have spread before the son of that popular, wealthy, democratic politician. But of no such

opportunities did he avail himself; the aspirations of the son were not directed by ambition; they were deep and earnest, but not worldly; more of the maternal than the paternal type. His mother's heartfelt desires were rather for the religious welfare, and the establishment of the Christian character of her children, than for their elevation in the world; and these feelings met a cordial response in the mind of her eldest son. It is true he did not ignore the importance of the great political questions which so much engrossed his father's attention, and which were so earnestly debated in that day. But whenever he wrote on them, which was not often, he discussed them in reasonable and Christian spirit, untinged by Puritan bitterness.

One of his publications, written in 1651, which treats of matters connected with national government, is entitled *The Fundamental Right, Safety, and Liberty of the People*. In that he says, alluding to a limited monarchy, "Though I shall not plead for the resettlement of kingly government (for I am not so far engaged in my affections to it, as it yet has been) yet I would not have any blame laid upon it beyond its desert; for doubtless it has its advantages above any other government, on one hand; as it has also its disadvantages on the other hand." "Kingly power did pass its limits - we may now speak of it." He then goes on to query, "Does parliament now keep within its right limits?" ... "and if things should yet devolve lower, into the great and confused body of the people, is it likely they would keep their limits?" He shows that in establishing justice the impossibility of the people acting for themselves, and the impropriety of their representatives in parliament assuming both legislative and administrative powers. But under no circumstances would his conscience allow him to bind himself to a party. He says, "There is not one sort of men on the face of

the earth to whom I bear any enmity in my spirit; but I wish with all my heart they might all attain and enjoy as much peace, prosperity, and happiness as their state will bear; and there are not any to whom I should envy the power of government. But whoever they are whom I saw fitted for it, and called to it, they should have my vote on their behalf." He goes on to show that where the spirit of selfishness holds its natural place in men's hearts, their government will not promote spontaneously true freedom for others who are under them; for when the selfish man has great power, it will be exerted in promoting his own aggrandizement, and the freedom of others only in so far as it suits his selfish ends. Therefore he maintained it was alone the change of heart from sinful selfishness, to the desire after the promotion of Christian righteousness among the national governors, that could secure true justice to those they governed.

Openly declaring such views, Isaac Pennington did not attach himself to any section, in that way which would prevent him from pointing out what he thought wrong in their proceedings. We cannot wonder under these circumstances, that he was not welcomed as a political writer by any of those who were struggling for power; politics in their worldly constructions and acceptations could not be long pursued by such a mind as his. Religion was his home; and it was all religious subjects that his heart and pen were chiefly engaged for many years --laboring to promote righteousness in all things. But in these efforts he met with much that was disheartening, and finally his hopes became so much depressed by the conclusions he drew from the Calvinistic theology that had been presented to him as gospel truths, that his energies for a time seemed totally prostrated. In this depressed state he providentially made the acquaintance of Lady Springett. Her mind had

more natural cheerfulness than his; but, like his, was deeply impressed with the consciousness that nothing on earth was worth living for if the heart was not fixed in its trust in the Lord, and in its desire to do his will on earth above all things. With these feelings in her soul, she was moving about amid the amusements and fashions of London life, when she first became acquainted with Isaac Penington. Before she met with him, she had had many trying experiences in her search after spiritual life. She was the widow of Sir William Springett, who died when she was about twenty years of age; and now she was about thirty, Penington being eight years older. Penington's acquaintance with Lady Springett soon ripened into confidential friendship, and a loving attachment succeeded. In 1654 they were married. During the interval between their marriage and removal to the Grange in 1668, they first became acquainted with the Quakers, or Friends of Truth, as they originally designated themselves.

Isaac Penington's religious experience and his religious conclusions, before his settlement at Chalfont, are unfolded by his own words. He says:

“My heart from my childhood was pointed towards the Lord, whom I feared and longed after from my tender years. I felt that I could not be satisfied with, nor indeed seek after the things of this perishing world, but I desired a true sense of, and unity with, what abides forever. There was something still within me which leavened and balanced my spirit almost continually; but I did not know it distinctly so as to turn to it, and give up to it entirely and with understanding. In this temper of mind I earnestly sought after the Lord, applying myself to hear sermons, and read the best books I

could find, but especially the Scriptures, which were very sweet and savory to me. Yes, I very earnestly desired and pressed after the knowledge of the Scriptures, but was much afraid of receiving men's interpretations of them, or of fastening any interpretations upon them myself; but fasted much, and prayed much, that from the Spirit of the Lord I might receive the true understanding of them, and that He would endow me with that knowledge which I might feel to be sanctifying and saving.

And indeed I did sensibly receive of His love, of His mercy, and of His grace; these at seasons when I was most filled with the sense of my own unworthiness, and had least expectation of the manifestations of them. But I became exceedingly entangled about election and reprobation; having accepted that doctrine as it was then held forth by the strictest of those that were termed Puritans, fearing that, notwithstanding all my desires and seeking after the Lord, He might in His decree have passed by me. I felt it would be better to me to bear His wrath, and be separated from His love for evermore; yet if He had so decreed, it would be, and I should, notwithstanding fair beginnings and hopes, fall away, and perish at last."

Under the gloom of that awful perversion of Christ's gospel to man, Isaac Pennington's sensitive mind suffered fearfully for years. Gleams of hope and spiritual brightness at times shone through the clouds, and brought some comfort to his mind; but no settled peace, no full abiding sense of his Heavenly Father's loving care kept possession of

his soul, so long as an apprehension of the truth of that God-dishonoring doctrine continued to find any place in his mind. But at length the time arrived when the triumph of Christian truth drove out that evil error, which, under one phase or another, had tended in Penington's mind to destroy a right sense of the supreme justice, love, and mercy of the Lord. They who were made instrumental in bringing about this happy change were not among the learned theologians of that day, but belonged to the Christian body before alluded to, which rejected the systematic theology taught by the professors of the popular divinity. He describes the result of his intercourse with the Quakers as follows :

At first acquaintance with this people, that which was of God in me opened, and I immediately in my spirit recognize them as children of my Father, truly begotten of His life by His own spirit. But the reasoning part presently rose up, contending against their uncouth way, for which I did disown them, and continued a stranger to them, and a reasoner against them, for about twelve months. By weighing and considering things in that way, I was still further and further off from discerning their leadings by the Spirit of God into those things. But at length it pleased the Lord to draw out His sword against that part in me, turning the wisdom and strength of it backward; and again to open that eye in me which He had given me to see the things of His kingdom in some measure from a child. And then I saw and felt them woven in that Life and spirit which I, through the treachery of the fleshly-wise part, had been estranged from. And now, what bitter days of mourning I have had

over this, the Lord alone fully knows. Oh! I have indeed known it to be a bitter thing *to* follow this wisdom instead of that which could make me truly understand the Scriptures. The Lord has judged me for it, and I have borne a burden and condemnation for what many in this day wear as their crown.

In another place he speaks of having "now at length met with the true way, and walked in that with the Lord, where daily certainty, yes, full assurance of faith and of understanding, is obtained." "Blessed be the Lord! There are many in this day who can truly and faithfully witness that they have been brought by the Lord *to* this state. We have by this learned of Him, not by the high, striving, aspiring mind, but by lying low, and being contented with a little; if only a crumb of bread, yet bread; if only a drop of water, yet water. And we have been contented with it, and thankful to the Lord for it. Nor was it by thoughtfulness and wise searching, or deep considering with our own wisdom and reason that we obtained this; but in the still, meek, and humble waiting have we found it." There was in Isaac Penington's religious experience much spiritual feeling; and occasionally we find in his writings an amount of figurative expression which has sometimes been called mysticism.

Whether it has a right to be so called, or not, depends on the meaning we attach to the word. If by mysticism in religion, we only mean an earnest longing after, and very high enjoyment of inward spiritual communion with God, and, in writing, frequent allusions to such spiritual experience, mingled with figurative phrases, we do not need to object to its application to Penington. But if, as is more commonly

understood, we mean by religious mysticism an ecstatic state of feeling, leading into what is unpractical and mysterious, instead of a calming influence that acts on the conscience and regulates the whole moral life, Penington was no mystic. That mysticism which looks at Bible history and Gospel teaching through a haze that resolves them into fanciful types and figures, dissipating the simple truth and the obvious meaning of Holy Scripture, could not correspond in any degree with Penington's religion. He, though contemplative and retiring, was a true practical Christian. In common with the early Friends, he avoided using terms which had originated in the dogmatic theology. With them he wished to keep to Scripture language, and to avoid artificial terms which were liable to unscriptural fabrications.

It will be observed that he regarded that which is now called Calvinism as having led his mind into serious error, and away from the reverential caution of his earlier days. It is in relation to its teachings that he says, "I have known it, indeed, to be a bitter thing to follow this wisdom, instead of that which could make me truly to understand the Scriptures." In some other instances he uses still stronger language, when describing the mental suffering and perplexities which had resulted from his having been influenced by such doctrine, instead of seeking and waiting reverentially and trustingly for the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he afterwards found to make clear whatever was necessary to be cleared, so that "God's will was truly made known to the heart in salvation, new life, and power."

The unsatisfied feeling with regard to spiritual communion with God, which for so many years was endured both by Isaac Penington and his wife, does not appear to have arisen, out of, or to have been

accompanied by, a sense of unforgiven sin. Circumstances indicate that in both cases the Lord was leaving them to pass through necessary experiences, until that degree of insight was acquired which prepared them to fill their allotted positions in the church. Isaac Penington became an eminent preacher of the Gospel among the Friends, and also a tireless writer. He was ever ready to put forth his literary powers and gentle persuasive influence, in defense of that spiritual religion and gospel Truth which had brought so much comfort to his own soul. Mary Penington seems to have been in a special manner fitted to be a true helpmate to him; her practical business capacity supplying what was less active in him. United they went forward with abiding trust in their Heavenly Father's love and care, their spiritual life being made strong in the Lord. To the inquiry, years after he had joined the Friends, if he were truly satisfied with the spiritual privileges he enjoyed, Isaac Penington replied, "Yes, indeed; I am satisfied at the very heart. Truly my heart is now united to Him whom I longed after, in an everlasting covenant of pure life and peace."

Of the early Puritans he retained a high appreciation and affectionate remembrance; but he regarded them as having eventually missed their way in some religious matters of great importance to spiritual life. He says: "There was among them great sincerity, and love, and tenderness, and unity in what was true; minding the work of God in themselves, and being sensible of grace and truth in one another's hearts, before there was such a rent among them. By degrees forms and different ways of worship grew among them, and the virtue and power of godliness decreased, and they were swallowed up in high esteem of and contending each sort for their own forms, while themselves had lost a sense of what they were *inwardly* to God, and

what they had *inwardly* received from God in the days of their former zeal and tenderness. Oh! that they could see this. Oh! that they could return to their early Puritan state, *to* the love and tenderness that was then in them. May the Lord open again the true spiritual eye in them, and give them to see with it!"

When Isaac Penington had anchored on what he felt to be gospel Truth, he was tireless in his efforts to draw others into that state which had brought him so much consolation and clearness of spiritual vision. Especially dreading that teaching which did not dwell on or lead to a consciousness of the absolute necessity of the purification of the heart and conduct, he became very close and earnest in pressing home the worthlessness of *religious belief* which did not bring forth *holiness of life*. Many of his letters addressed to acquaintances under these feelings still exist. Some of them were to persons now quite unknown, and various others to his own relatives, including several in serious conflict with his father, a Puritan, [it should be noted, that Isaac Penington had probably not yet entered the Kingdom at this early date; nor had he the benefit of Fox's admonitions to: *do not contend with those out of the truth, and do not educate the wise* - unless specifically directed by the Holy Spirit as to exactly what to do, and when to do it. If someone asks, you should be ready to give a reason for your hope of union and entering the Kingdom, but only if asked.]

An event was then approaching in the nation's history which must have claimed the utmost attention and interest of Alderman Penington. Whether amid that anxiety the correspondence between him and his eldest son extended any further, or was ever renewed, it is now impossible to ascertain.

When Richard Cromwell had proved himself unequal to the task of holding the reins of government which had been placed in his hands, one popular change succeeded another without any consolidation of central authority. Most of those who had sat as the late king's judges could read in the signs of the times the probable restoration of the Stuart dynasty. That thought brought more terror to many hearts than they were inclined to manifest. At length the crisis came, and on the first day of May, 1660, the famous declaration of Charles the Second from Breda was presented by his commissioner to both Houses of Parliament; and also to the city authorities, and through them to the nation. The royal promise of indemnity which it contained raised for a few days the drooping hopes of those who had most to fear. Thus the indemnity clause announced :

We do by these presents declare that we do grant a free and general pardon, which we are ready on demand to pass under our great seal of England to all our subjects whatever, who within forty days after the publishing hereof shall lay hold on this our grace and favor, and shall by any public act declare their doing so, and that they return to the loyalty and obedience of good subjects; excepting only such persons as shall hereafter be excepted by parliament - those only to be excepted. Let all our subjects, however faulty, rely upon the word of a king solemnly given by this present declaration, that no crime whatsoever committed against us, or our royal father, before the publication of this, shall ever rise in judgment, or be brought in question against any of them, to the least endangerment of them either in their lives, liberties, or estates, (as far as lies in our power) or so

much as the prejudice of their reputations.

Of the original members of the Parliamentary High Court of Justice, which condemned the late King, forty-eight were still living; and nineteen of these, relying upon *the word of a king* so solemnly set forth, delivered themselves up as accepting pardon and promising allegiance to Charles the Second. Of the remaining twenty-nine, who could not rely on the royal promise as sufficient to ensure pardon, a few secreted themselves in England -the others immediately went abroad. Alderman Penington was one of the nineteen who, relying on the word of the King, came in before the expiration of the forty days. On the 8th of May the two Houses of Parliament proclaimed Charles the Second, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and on the twenty-fifth he arrived at Dover.

Before the arrival of the King, the Parliament, anxious to prove to him its great loyalty, decided that all they who had sat as his father's judges should be imprisoned and brought to trial; and also everyone who in an official capacity had had anything to do with his accusation or execution. About three months after the kingdom was restored to Charles, twenty-nine persons were brought to trial, and condemned to death as regicides. Included in the twenty-nine were the nineteen trusting ones who had given themselves up on his declaration of indemnity. Of the nineteen, fourteen were spared from death, the punishment being changed to imprisonment for life, and all their property and estates were confiscated. Ten, among whom were six who had signed the king's death-warrant, and four officials, were condemned to death, and suffered execution.

Alderman Penington, with the thirteen others, was committed as a

prisoner to that Tower over which he once ruled as an honorable and executive governor; but his duration there was cut short by hard usage. Sir John Robinson, Lieutenant of the Tower, was devoid of, humanity and of principle; and the treatment to which he subjected the prisoners was consistent with his character. Lucy Hutchinson, in the memoirs of her husband, Colonel Hutchinson, says :

The gentlemen who were the late king's judges, and who were decoyed to surrender themselves to custody by the Houses' proclamation, were kept in miserable bondage under that inhuman, bloody jailer, the Lieutenant of the Tower, who stifled some of them to death for want of air; and, when they had not one penny but what was given them to support their families, (all their estates being confiscated), exacted from them rates for bare unfurnished prison rooms; of some, forty pounds for one miserable chamber; of others, double; beside unjust fees, for to raise  
"Which their poor wives were obliged to engage their jointures, or make other miserable shifts. And yet this rogue had all this while three pounds a week paid out of the Exchequer for everyone of them."

This unscrupulous man, Sir John Robinson, will come under our notice again.

It was in October that the regicides were condemned and their estates confiscated. In the State Papers belonging to that period, which have recently been published, I find this entry, " December 7th, 1660: Petition of George, Bishop of Worcester, to the King, for the grant of a lease of tenements in Whitefriars belonging to the bishopric, value

eighty pounds a year, forfeited by Isaac Penington, late Alderman of London." And again, "August 8th, 1661; Grant to George, Bishop of Worcester, of five houses, etc. in Whitefriars, near Fleet-street, lately belonging to Isaac Penington, attainted of treason." In the *Gentleman's Magazine* it is stated that Alderman Penington's estates, among which was the seat of the Shurlows, called The Place, being confiscated, were given by Charles the Second to the Duke of Grafton. Finally, we have in the State Papers, under the date of "Dec. 19th, 1661; Warrant to Sir John Robinson, Lieutenant of the Tower, to deliver the corpse of Isaac Penington, Sr. who died in prison there, to his relations."

Neither record nor relic beyond what has been introduced, have I been able to discover of the condemned alderman, Isaac Penington, except that his silver drinking cup has for many years been in possession of his American descendants. It is now the property of Edward Penington of Philadelphia. It has on it the Tower stamp, the initials I. P., and the date 1642, the year in which he was chosen Lord Mayor of London.

## Chapter II

### **Isaac Penington's Spiritual Journey**

Isaac Penington was a prolific writer, and has left us several descriptions of his spiritual walk, through many frustrations, toils, and snares - through many sects - through loneliness - through trying to find God by searching the Scriptures, and finally through hearing the preaching of George Fox, describing the way he must walk to find his beloved. From there his journey truly began, with the pains and joys of death of self on the cross of Christ. He begins: "I was acquainted," says

he,

"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 so that indeed I was a wonder to some that knew me, because of the savor and life of religion which dwelt in my heart, and appeared in my conversation. But I never dared trust the spring of my life and the springings up of life there from: but in reading the scriptures, I gathered what knowledge I could, and set this over the spring and springings of life in me; and indeed judged that I ought to do so. 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 everything 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.- At that time, when 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 what 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 that they might have the presence of that God whom I wanted), promising to return to them, if ever I met with that which my soul wanted, and had clearness in the Lord to do.

After I had 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 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 or the Lord dwelling 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 in which 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 know 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 Saviour, 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 indeed 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 until that day.

In the sense of my lost estate," thus Penington proceeds,

I sought after the Lord; I read the scriptures; I watched over my own heart; I cried unto the Lord for what I felt the want of; I blessed his name in what He mercifully did *for* me, and bestowed on me. Whatever I read in the scriptures, in the way of God from my understanding, I gave myself to the faithful practice of; being contented to meet with all the reproach, opposition, and several kinds of sufferings, which it pleased the Lord to measure out to me. I cannot but say that the Lord was good to me, and did visit me, did teach me, did help me, did testify his acceptance of me many times, to the refreshing and joy of my heart before him.

But my soul was not satisfied with what I met, nor indeed could be, there being further quickenings and pressings in

my spirit, after a more full certain, and satisfactory knowledge; even after the sense, sight, and enjoyment of God, as was testified in the scriptures to have been felt and enjoyed in the former times; for I saw plainly that there was a stop of the the streams, and a great falling short of the power, life and glory, which they partook of. We had not so the Spirit, nor were so in the faith, nor did so walk and live in God, as they did. They were come to Mount Sion, and the heavenly Jerusalem, which we had hardly so much as the literal knowledge or apprehension what they were. So that I saw the whole course of religion among us was, for the most part, but a talk, compared to what they felt, enjoyed, possessed, and lived in.

This sense made me sick at heart indeed, and set me upon deep crying to God close searching the scriptures, and waiting on God, that I might receive the pure sense and understanding of them, from and in the light, and by the help of his Spirit. And what the Lord did bestow on me in that state, with thankfulness I remember before Him at this very day; for He was my God, and he pitied me, and was a watcher over me; though He had not then pleased to direct me how to stay my mind upon Him. And then I was led, (indeed I was led, I did not run of myself) ,into a way of separation from the worship of the world, into a gathered society; for this both the scripture and the Spirit of God in me gave testimony unto; and what we then met with, and what leadings and help we then felt, there is a remembrance and testimony in my heart to this day. But there was

somewhat wanting, and we mistook our way, for when we should have pressed forward into the spirit and power, we ran too much outward into the letter and form; and though the Lord in many things helped us, yet for that He was against us, and brought darkness, confusion, and scattering upon us. I was sorely broken and darkened, and in this darkened state sometimes lay still for a long season, secretly mourning, and crying out to the Lord, night and day.

Sometimes I ran about, listening after what might appear or break forth in others; but never met with anything where there was the least answer in my heart, save in one people, who had a touch of truth; but I never expressed so much to any of them, nor indeed felt them at all able to reach my condition. At last, after all my distresses, wanderings, and sore travails, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life, and power which I had been longing for, and searching after. I had likewise, some pretty distance of time after this, opportunity of meeting with some of them; and several of them were by the Lord moved (I know it to be so since) to come to me. As I remember, at the very first, they reached to the life of God in me; which life answered their voice, and caused a great love in me to spring to them; but still in my reasonings with them, and disputes alone (in my mind) concerning them, I was very far off from owning them as so knowing the Lord, or so appearing in his life and power, as my *condition needed*, and as my soul waited for. Yes, the more I

conversed with them, the more I seemed in my understanding and reason to get over them, and to trample them under my feet, as a poor, weak, silly, contemptible generation, who had some smattering of Truth in them, and some honest desires towards God; but very far off from the clear and full understanding of his way and will. And this was the effect almost of every discourse with them: they still reached my heart, and I felt them in the secrets of my soul; which caused the love in me always to continue, yes, sometimes to increase towards them; but daily my understanding got more and more over them, and in this daily, I more and more despised them. After a long time, I was invited to hear one *of* them (as I had been often, they in tender love pitying me, and feeling my want of what they possessed); and there was an answer in my heart, and I went with fear and trembling, with desires to the Most High, who was over all and knew all, that I might not receive anything for truth which was not of Him, nor withstand anything which was of Him: but might how before the appearance of the Lord my God, and none other. And, indeed, when I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of truth from the spirit of truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. [This was George Fox speaking at John Crook's]. I not only felt words and demonstrations from without; but I felt the dead quickened, the Seed raised; so much that my heart, (in the certainty of light, and clearness of true sense), said: *This is He, this is He, there is no other. This is He whom I have waited for and sought*

*after from my childhood; who was always near me , and had often begotten life in my heart; but I knew Him not distinctly, nor how to receive Him or dwell with Him. And, then in this sense, (in the melting and breakings of my spirit), was I opened up to the Lord, to become his, both in waiting for the further revealing of his Seed in me, and to serve Him in the life and power of his Seed.*

Now what I met with after this in my travails, in my waitings, in my spiritual exercises, *is not to be uttered*; only in general I may say this, I met with the very strength of hell. The cruel oppressor roared upon me, and made me feel the bitterness of his captivity, while he had any power. Yes, the Lord was far from my help, and from the voice of my roaring. I also met with deep subtiles and devices to entangle me in that wisdom which seemed able to make wise in the things of God; but indeed is foolishness, and a snare to the soul, bringing it back into captivity. where the enemy's skills prevail. And what I met with outwardly from my own dear father, from my kindred, from my servants, from the people and powers of the world, for no other cause but fearing my God, worshipping Him as He has required of me, and bowing to his Seed, which is his Son. who is to be worshipped by men and angels for evermore, the Lord my God knows, before whom my heart and ways are; who preserved me in love to them, in the midst of all I suffered from them, and does still so preserve me; blessed be his pure and holy name. 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 you will be satisfied, and inquire no further. I have met with my God. I have met with my Savior, and He has not been present with me without his salvation; but I have felt the healing 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 has had the true virtue in it, which my soul has rejoiced in, in the presence of the Lord. I have met with the Seed's Father, and in the Seed I have felt him my Father. There I have read his nature, his love, his compassion, his tenderness, which have melted, overcome, and changed my heart before Him. I have met with the Seed's faith, which has done and does that, which the faith of man can never do. I have met with the true birth, with the birth which is heir of the kingdom, and inherits the kingdom, I have met *with the true* spirit of prayer and supplication, in which 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 has 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.**

**Now, the Lord knows, these things I do not utter in a boasting way; but would rather be speaking of my nothingness, my emptiness, my weakness, my manifold infirmities which I feel more than ever. The Lord has broken the man's part in me, and I am a worm and no man before Him. I have no strength to do any good or service for Him; no, I cannot watch over or preserve myself. I feel daily that I do not keep my own soul alive; but am weaker before men, yes, weaker in my spirit, as in myself, than I have ever been. But I cannot but utter to the praise of my God, and I feel his arm stretched out for me and my weakness, which I feel in myself, is not my loss, but advantage before Him. And these things I write, as having no end at all in them of my own, but felt it this morning required of me; and so in submission and subjection to my God have I given up to do it, leaving the success and service of it with him."**

**Aylesbury, 15th 3d Mo. 1667**

**We have another description, written at a different time, of his**

walk: "My heart from my childhood," says he,

"was pointed towards the Lord, whom I cared, and looked after, from my tender years: wherein I felt that I could not be satisfied with (nor indeed seek after) the things of this perishing world, which naturally pass away: but I desired true sense of and unity with, that which abides forever.

There was somewhat indeed then still within me (even the Seed of eternity) which leavened and balanced my spirit almost continually; but I knew it not distinctly, so as to turn to it, and give up to it, entirely and understandingly.

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

And indeed I did sensibly receive of his love, of his mercy, and of his grace, which I felt still freely to move towards me: and at seasons when I was most filled with the sense of my own unworthiness, and had least expectations of the manifestations of them. But I was exceedingly entangled about Election and Reprobation, (having drunk in that

doctrine of predestination, as it was then held forth by the strictest of those that were termed Puritans ; and as then seemed to be very manifest and positive, from Rom 10), fearing lest, notwithstanding all my desires and seekings after the Lord, He might in his decree have passed me by; and I felt it would be bitter to me to bear his wrath, and be separated from his love for evermore; yet, if He had so decreed, it would be; and I should, (notwithstanding these fair beginnings and hopes), fall away and perish at the last.

In this great trouble and grief (which was much added to by not finding the Spirit of God so in me and with me, as I had read and believed the former Christians had it,) and in mourning over and grappling with secret corruptions and temptations, I spent many years, and fell into great weakness of body; and, often casting myself upon my bed, did wring my hands and weep bitterly: begging earnestly of the Lord daily, that I might be pitied by Him, and helped against my enemies. and be made conformable to the image of his Son, by his own renewing power.

And indeed at last (when my nature was almost spent, and the pit of despair was even closing its mouth upon me), 'mercy sprang, and deliverance came, and the Lord my God owned me, and sealed his love unto me, and light sprung within me; which made not only the scriptures, but the very outward creatures glorious in my eye: so that every thing was sweet and pleasant, and lightsome round about me. But I soon felt that this estate was too high and glorious for me,

and I was not able to abide in it, it so overcame my natural spirits. Wherefore, blessing the name of the Lord for his great goodness to me, I prayed to Him to take that from me which I was not able to bear; and to give me such a proportion of his light and presence, as was suitable to my present state, and might fit me for his service. Whereupon this was presently removed from me; yet a savor remained with me, in which I had sweetness, and comfort, and refreshment for a long season.

But my mind did not then know how to turn to, and dwell with what gave me the savor; nor rightly to read what God did daily write in my heart; which sufficiently manifested itself to be of Him, by its living virtue, an pure operation upon me.

But I looked upon the scriptures to be my rule, and so would weigh the inward appearances of God to me, by what was outwardly written; and dared not receive anything from God immediately, as it sprang from the fountain. but only in that mediate way. Herein did I limit the Holy One of Israel. and exceedingly hurt my own soul, as I afterwards felt, and came to understand.

Yet the Lord was tender to me, and condescended exceedingly, opening scriptures to me freshly every day, teaching and instructing, warming and comforting my heart by this. And truly He did help me to pray, to believe, and to love Him and his appearances in any; yes, to love all the sons of men, and all his creatures, with a *true* love. But that

in me which knew not the appearances of the Lord in my spirit, but would limit Him to words of Scriptures formerly written, - that proceeded yet further, and would be raising a fabric of knowledge out of the scriptures, and gathering a perfect rule (as I thought) concerning my heart, my words, my ways, my worship: and according to what I thus drank in (after this manner from the scriptures.) I practiced, and with much seriousness of spirit, and prayer to God, fell a helping to build an independent congregation, in which the savor Of life and the presence of God was fresh with me; as I believe there are yet some alive of that congregation can testify.

This was my state, when I was smitten, broken, and distressed by the Lord, confounded in my worship, confounded in my knowledge, stripped of all in one day (which it is hard to utter), and was a matter of amazement to all that beheld me. I lay open and naked to all that would inquire of me, and strive to search out what might be the cause the Lord should deal so with me. They would at first be jealous that I had sinned and provoked him so to do it; but when they had scanned things thoroughly, and I had opened my heart nakedly to them, I do not remember anyone that ever retained that sense concerning me. My soul remembers the wormwood and gall, the exceeding bitterness of that state, and is still humbled in me, in the remembrance of it before the Lord. Oh! how did I wish with Job, that I might come before Him, and knowingly plead with Him; for indeed I had no sense of any guilt upon me, but was sick of love towards Him, and as one violently rent

from the bosom of his beloved ! Oh, how gladly would I have met with death! For I was weary all the day long, and afraid of the night, and weary also of the night-season, and afraid of the ensuing day.

I remember my grievous and bitter mourning to the Lord. How often I did say, *O Lord, Why have You forsaken me? Why have You broken me to pieces? I had no delight but You, no desire after any but You. My heart was bent wholly to serve You, and You have even fitted me* (as appeared to my sense) *by many deep exercises and experiences for your service. Why do You make me thus miserable?* Sometimes I would cast mine eye upon a scripture, and my heart would even melt within me. At other times I would desire to pray to my God as I had formerly done; but I found I knew Him not, and I could not tell how to pray, or in any wise to come near Him, as I had formerly done. In this condition I wandered up and down from mountain to hill, from one sort to another, with a cry in my spirit, *Can you tell news of my beloved? Where does He dwell? Where does he appear?* But their voices were still strange to me; and I should retire sad and oppressed, and bowed down in spirit, from them."

Now surely, all serious, sober, sensible people will be ready to .inquire how I came satisfyingly to know the Lord at length: or whether I do yet certainly know Him, and am yet truly satisfied.

Yes indeed, I am satisfied at my very heart. Truly my heart is united to Him whom I longed after, in an everlasting

covenant of pure life and peace.

Well then, some will say how came this about! Why, thus? The Lord opened my spirit. The Lord gave me the certain and sensible feeling of the pure Seed, which had been with me from the beginning. The Lord caused his holy power to fall upon me, and gave me such an inward demonstration and feeling of the Seed of life, that I cried out in my spirit, *This is He, this is He, there is not another, there never was another He was always near me, though I knew Him not,* (not so sensibly, not so distinctly, as now He was revealed in me, and to me by the Father). *O that I might now be joined to Him, and He alone might live in me!* And so, in the willingness which God had wrought in me, (in this day of his power to my soul), I gave up to be instructed, exercised, and led by Him, in the waiting for and feeling of his holy Seed, that all might be wrought out of me which could not live with the Seed, but would be hindering the dwelling and reigning of the Seed in me, while it remained and had power. And so I have gone through a sore travail, and fight of afflictions and temptations of many kinds; wherein the Lord has been merciful to me, in helping me, and preserving the spark of life in me, in the midst of many things which had befallen me, whose nature tended to quench and extinguish it.

Now thus having met with the true way, and walked with the Lord therein, wherein daily certainty, yes, and full assurance of faith and of understanding is at length obtained, I cannot

be silent, (true love and pure life stirring in me and moving me), but am necessitated to testify of it to others; and this is it: - **To retire inwardly, and wait to feel somewhat of the Lord, somewhat of his holy spirit and power, discovering, and drawing from that which is contrary to Him, and into his holy nature and heavenly image. And then, as the mind is joined to this, somewhat is received, some true life, some true light, some true discerning; which the creature not exceeding, (but abiding in the measure of), is safe. But it is easy erring from this, but hard abiding with it, and not going before its leadings. But he that feels life, and begins in life, does he not begin safely! And he that waits and fears, and goes on no further than his captain goes before him, does he not proceed safely : Yes, very safely, even until he comes to be so settled and established in the virtue, demonstration, and power of Truth, as nothing can prevail to shake Him.**

Now, blessed be the Lord, there are many at this day who can truly and faithfully witness, that they have been brought by the Lord to this state. And thus have we learned of the Lord; namely, not by the high striving, aspiring mind: but by lying low, and being contented with a little. If but a crumb of bread, (yet if bread), if but a drop of water, (yet if water), we have been contented with it, and also thankful to the Lord for it; nor by thoughtfulness, and wise searching and deep considering with our own wisdom and reason have we

obtained it; but in the still, meek, and humble waiting, have we found that brought into the death, which is not to know the mysteries of God's kingdom; and that which is to live, made alive, and increase in life.

**Therefore he that would truly know the Lord, let him take warning of his own reason and understanding.** I tried this way very far, for I considered most seriously and uprightly. I prayed, I read the scriptures, I earnestly desired to understand and find out whether what this people, called Quakers, testified of, was the only way and truth of God, (as they seemed to me but to pretend). But for all this, prejudices multiplied upon me, and strong reasonings against them, which appeared to me as unanswerable. But when the Lord revealed his Seed in me, and touched my heart with it, which administered true peace and virtue to me, I presently felt them there the children of the Most High, and so grown up in his life, power, and holy dominion, (as the inward eye, being opened by the Lord, sees), as drew forth from me great reverence of heart, and praises to the Lord, who had so appeared among men in these latter days.

And as God draws, in any respect, to himself, I give up in faithfulness to Him. Despise the shame, take up the cross: for indeed it is a way which is very cross to man, and which his wisdom will many be exceedingly ashamed: but that must be denied and turned from, and the secret, sensible drawings of God's Spirit waited for and given up to. **Mind,**

**people, He that would come into the new covenant, must come into the obedience of it.** The light of life, which God has hidden in the heart, is the covenant; and from this covenant God does not give knowledge, to satisfy the vast, aspiring, comprehending wisdom of man; but living knowledge, to feed what is quickened by Him; which knowledge is given in the obedience, and is very sweet and precious to the state of him that knows how to feed upon it. Yes, truly, this is of a very excellent, pure, precious nature; and a little of it weighs down that great, vast knowledge in the comprehending part, which the man's spirit and nature so much prizes and presses after.

**And truly, friends, I witness at this day a great difference between the sweetness of comprehending the knowledge of things as expressed in the scriptures, (this I fed much on formerly); and tasting the hidden life, the hidden manna in the heart, (which is my food now, blessed forever be the Lord my God and Saviour). Oh, that others had a true, certain and sensible taste of the life, virtue, and goodness of the Lord, as it is revealed there.** Surely it could not but kindle the true hunger; and inflame the true thirst; which can never be satisfied but by the true bread, and by water from the living fountain. This the Lord (in the tenderness of his love, and in the riches of his grace and mercy), has brought us to; and this we earnestly and uprightly desire and endeavor, that others may be brought to also; that they may rightly (in the

true silence of the flesh, and in the pure stillness of spirit, wait for, and in the Lord's due time receive, that which answers the desire of the awakened mind and soul, and satisfies it with the true, precious substance for evermore.

Amen.

## CHAPTER III

### **Mary Penington's Spiritual Journey**

His wife, Mary Penington's early experiences were different, but just as instructive to the necessary in relating yet another's experience in unmasking of the false ways, before the true way can be seen and followed.

Mary Penington also had been religiously inclined from her childhood, and had been brought up in a family in which the forms, at least, of religion were observed with great strictness. While yet a child she was one day much struck with hearing a sermon read, on the text, "Pray continually." The writer, among other benefits of prayer, had observed that it was an exercise in which the saints were distinguished from the world; for, though the world could in many things hypocritically imitate them, yet in prayer it could not. This forcibly wrought on her mind, for she knew that the printed prayers which she used, were such as the world also could use; and she therefore, with sorrow, concluded herself to be yet unacquainted with true prayer. When the reader had finished, and she was left alone in the room, she threw herself on the bed, crying out aloud, Lord, what is prayer? At this time, she could barely write, and could scarcely join her letters; but, having heard that

some persons wrote prayers for their own use, she penned one to serve her as a morning supplication, The subject fit was, that “as the Lord had commanded the Israelites to offer up a morning sacrifice, so she offered the sacrifice of prayer and desired preservation for the day.”

She while in this practice, and wrote two other Prayers, but doubt crept in here also and she began to think true prayer was extemporaneous. Extemporaneous prayer, therefore, she attempted, but found that she could not always pray. Sometimes she kneeled long, but could not utter a word. At length one day, she heard of the sentences of Prynne, Bestwick, and Burton, three eminent sufferers in the persecution under Archbishop Laud, in the reign of Charles I. The sad relation of the lot of these men sunk deep into her mind, and cries were raised in her, (or them and all the innocent people in the nation. She went into a private room and shutting the door, poured out her soul to the Lord they are her own words), in a vehement manner for considerable time, being wonderfully melted. In this, she felt ease, peace, and acceptance, knowing assuredly that this was true prayer. Soon after this she entirely refused to join in the common prayer read in the family, or to kneel in the place of public worship; but went on foot two or three miles, regardless of the weather, to hear a puritan minister to pray, who prayed extemporaneously. About this time she also avoided vain company, declined the use of cards and similar amusements, was strict in observance of what was termed the Sabbath, and would not even eat on that day such things as took up much time to prepare.

As she advanced in life she rejected several offers of marriage, on account of the want of religion which she perceived in her suitors; and at length married a young man of respectable family named Springett;

intent, like herself, to avoid superstition in religion, and on whose long acquaintance had proved worthy of her. She did not live long with her first husband, who, being a colonel of foot in the Parliament, died of fevers at his quarters Arundel. Mary Springett was with child, at the time of her husband's death, of her daughter Gulielma, (who afterwards became the wife of William Penn). Upon her birth, the practice of sprinkling infants as a baptism, was so objectionable to her, that she refused to have her subjected to the ceremony, which was severely criticized by her father and the peers of her society; they sent several ministers to try to convince her of the necessity, but they spoke in vain.

Thus she stood her ground against the formality of a ceremony without scriptural foundation, but still being unsettled in what to believe, she swayed in the spiritual winds, from one notion to another; finally resorting to spiritual exercises. She fasted often prayed at least three times a day, often many more times, and daily sought to hear sermons, lectures, fasts, and thanksgivings. Most of the day was spent in reading the Bible, or in praying, listening to other, etc. She says, "so great was my delight in these things, I sought solitary places to pray in: gardens, fields, and out buildings so that I could be alone, which was necessary because I was loud in my pouring out my soul."

Thus, after her long research, and zeal in whatsoever the professors of the day recommended, she did not find in herself that real change of heart which she aspired after, nor acceptance with the Lord. She therefore began to conclude, that although the Lord and his Truth were unchangeable, yet it was not in her day made known to any on the earth. And for some time she gave no attention to religion; but

devoted herself to the diversions and pleasures of the world, both in public and private. But in the midst of such pursuits her heart was still sad; and she would often retire from all company for several days together. Indeed her mind was captivated by the dissipating amusements of the age.

Mary Penington describes her own religious feelings as being at this time in a very unsatisfied state. She says she changed her ways often, going from one notion to another. In fact, she went the whole round of the popular sects of that day; heard their preachers on all occasions; made the acquaintance of high religious professors; attended their lectures, their fasts, their thanksgivings, their prayer meetings; watched their private walk in life, and noticed the position they took in the world. Instead of meeting with the spiritual instruction and seeing the realization of the Christian life of which she had been in quest, she turned away heartsick, tender of the impression of a prevailing empty show that had assumed the name of religion. At length she made up her mind to abandon all outward forms of religious worship, and to hold herself unconnected with any section of Christians, relying on the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of the Lord, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Having found no abiding comfort amid religious professors, she at length determined to try the world of people living for pleasure. She says,

I then had my conversation much among people of no religion, being ashamed to be counted religious, or to do anything that was called religious; and I began to loathe whatever profession of that sort anyone made, holding the professors of every sort worse than the profane, they

boasted so much of what I knew they had not attained; I having been zealous in whatever they pretended to, yet could not find purging of heart, nor an answer from the Lord of acceptance. In this restless state I let in every sort of notion that rose in that day, and for a time applied myself to examine them, and get out of them whatever good could be found; but still sorrow and trouble was the end of all. I was at length ready to conclude that though the Lord and His Truth were certain, yet that they are not now made known to any upon earth; and I determined no more to inquire or look after God, thinking it was in vain to seek him. So for some time I took no notice of any religion, but minded recreation, as it is called; and went after it into many excesses and vanities - as foolish mirth, carding, dancing, and singing. I frequented music assemblies, and made vain visits where there were jovial feastings. I delighted in curiosities, and in what would please the vain mind, and satisfy the lust of the eye and the pride of life; frequenting places of pleasure, where vainly dressed persons resorted to show themselves and to see others in the like excess of folly; and riding about from place to place in an airy mind. But in the midst of all this my heart was often sad and pained beyond expression.

After a round of such fashionable recreations as above specified, she tells us that, taking with her none but her daughter, little Guli, and her maid, she would often in disgust forsake for a time city life, and seek entire seclusion in the country, where she would give way to her feelings of distress. She says, "I was not hurried into those follies by being captivated by them, but from not having found in religion what I

had sought, and longed after. I would often say within myself, what are they all to me? I could easily leave all this; for it has not my heart, it is not my delight, it has not power over me. I would rather serve the Lord, if I could indeed feel and know what would be acceptable to Him. One night in my country retirement I went to bed very sad and disconsolate; and that night I dreamed I saw a book of hieroglyphics of religion respecting things to come in the Church, or religious state. I dreamed that I took no delight at all in them; and felt no closing of my mind with them, but turned away greatly oppressed. It being evening, I went out from the company into the open air, and lifting up mine eyes to the heaven and cried out, 'Lord, allow me no more to fall in with any false way, but show me the truth.' Immediately I thought the sky opened, and a bright light like fire fell upon my hand, which so frightened me that I awoke, and cried out. When my daughter's maid, (who was in the chamber), came to the bed-side to see what was the matter with me, I trembled a great time after I was awakened."

She ventured not to suppose that she felt an influence of God's Spirit on her heart; although at times so great was her thirst for God, that she seemed to resemble the parched earth, or the hunted deer, panting for water. In this state another remarkable dream was her lot, a part of which in her own words is as follows:

I one night dreamed that as I was sitting in a room alone, retired and sad, I heard a very loud noise, some screaming, yelling, and roaring in a doleful manner; some casting up their caps, and hallooing in way of triumph and joy. And as I listened to learn what was the cause of the noise. I thought that Christ must have come, and that this was the different

state of the people at his coming; some in joy, and some in extreme sorrow and amazements. Thus I waited in much dread, for uncertainty about this thing. At last I found that neither the joy nor the sorrow of this confused multitude did arise from a certain knowledge of his coming, but it was the effects of a false rumor. So I stayed alone in the room, for I found I was not to join with either, but to wait in the stillness, and not to go forth to inquire concerning the tumult of the multitude. While I sat thus, it became like a pretension, and it was manifest to me that they were mistaken. So I remained cool and low in my mind, until one came and said in a low voice, Christ has come indeed, and is in the next room, and with the Lamb's wife. At which my heart secretly leaped within me, and I was in haste to go, and express my love to Him, and joy at his coming. But I was rebuked for my haste and instructed to be sober, and come cool and softly into the next room; which I did. Then I came into a spacious hall, but stood at the bottom, trembling: for though I was joyous at the thing, yet I dared not go near him; for it was said in me, Stay, and see whether He owns you, and takes you to be such as you take yourself to be. Christ stood at the upper end of the hall in the appearance of a fresh, lovely youth, clad, in gray cloth, very neat and plain (at this time I had not heard of a Quaker; or their garb). He was of a sweet, affable, courteous carriage; and I saw him embrace several poor, old, simple persons, whose appearance was very contemptible and poor, without wisdom or beauty; from which I judged that his wisdom and discretion was great, that He can, thought I, behold the

hidden worth *of* these people, who to me appeared so unlovely and simple. At last He beckoned to me to come to Him, at which I was very glad, but went lowly, and trembling, in much solidity, and weightiness of spirit. Then I beheld a beautiful young virgin, slender, modest, and grave, in plain apparel, becoming and graceful, and her image was fully answering his, as a brother and sister.

Her mind having fully realized the superficial and unsatisfying character of the fashionable amusements of the world of pleasures, her thoughts again and again turned to the religious feelings of former days. She still clung to the belief that though she had run into vanity, she was yet under her heavenly Father's care, and that He who had made the blessed promise to that state, knew of the hungering and thirsting after righteousness which often had such possession of her mind. But above all things she abhorred hypocrisy and religious presumption in anyone, and therefore she often distrusted herself, and these feelings. She could not for a long time entertain the idea that it was the Holy Spirit which was giving her these gleams of light and trust, and tendering her heart in prayerful feeling towards God. Thus she details circumstances that unfold her state of mind:-

"One day, when going through the city from a country-house, I could not make my way through the crowd that filled the street, (it was the day on which the Lord Mayor was sworn), but was forced to go into a house until it was over. Being burdened by the vanity of their show, I said to a believer that stood by me, 'What benefit have we now by all the blood that has been shed, and by Charles being kept out

of the nation, seeing all these follies are again allowed!' He answered; none that he knew of, save the enjoyment of their religion. To which I replied, 'That is a benefit to you who have a religion to be protected in the exercise of but it is none to me.'

Looking back on that period, when she would not allow to herself that she had any religion at all, she says it was wonderful to her to remember how she, notwithstanding, confided in the goodness and care of God.

I frequently had help from Him while in the most confused and disquieted state I ever knew. Trust in the Lord was richly given me in that day when I dared not acknowledge myself to have any religion I could call true; for if I were but taking a servant, or doing any outward thing that much concerned my condition in the world, I never feared, but retired, waiting to see what the day would bring forth, and as things were offered to me closed with them, if I felt my heart answered to it." At this very time she says, "In anguish of spirit I could but cry to the Lord, 'If I may not come to you as a child, because I have not the spirit of sonship, yet you are my Creator; and as your creature I cannot breathe or move without you. Help is only to be had from you. If you are inaccessible in your own glory, and I can only get help where it is to be had, and you only have power to help me, what am I to do?'"

Oh! the distress I felt in this time, having never dared to kneel down, as formally going to prayer, for years, because I

feared I could not call God Father in truth; and I dared not mock Him as with a form. Sometimes I would be melted into tears, and feel an inexpressible tenderness; but not knowing what it was from, and being ready to misjudge all religion, I thought it was some influence from the planets which governed this body. But I dared not regard anything in me being of or from God; or that I felt any influence of His spirit on my heart. I was like the parched heath for want of rain, and like the hunted deer longing for water, so great was my thirst after what I did not know was near.

In the condition I have mentioned, of weary seeking and not finding, I married my dear husband Isaac Penington. My love was drawn to him, because I found he saw the deceit of all mere notions about religion; he lay as one that refused to be comforted until He came to His temple 'who is truth and no lie.' All things that had only the *appearance* of religion were very manifest to him, so that he was sick and weary of show, and in this, my heart united with him, and a desire was in me to be serviceable to him in this his desolate condition; for he was as one alone, and felt miserable in the world. I gave up much to be a companion to him. And, oh! the secret groans and cries that were raised in me, that I might be visited of the Lord, and brought to a clear knowledge of his truth and way; that my feet might be turned into that way before I went forward, even if I never should take one step in it that would bring joy or peace; yet that I might assuredly know myself to be in it, even if my time were spent in sorrow.

I resolved never to go back into those formal things I had left, having found death and darkness in them; but would rather be without a religion until the Lord manifestly taught me one. Many times, when alone, did I reason thus: - 'Why should I not know the way of Divine life? For if the Lord would give me all in this world, it would not satisfy me.' 'No,' I could cry out, 'I care not for a portion in this life: give it to those that care for it: I am miserable with it. It is acceptance with God, of which I once had a sense, that I desire, and that alone can satisfy me.'

While I was in this state, I heard of a new people called Quakers, but I resolved not to inquire after them nor the principles they held. For a year or more after I had heard of them in the north, I heard nothing of their values except that they used *thee* and *thou* to everyone; and I saw a book written about plain language by George Fox, which I remember I thought very ridiculous; so gave no attention either to the people or the book, except to scoff at them and it. Though I thus despised this people, I had sometimes a desire to attend one of their meetings, if I could go unknown, and hear them pray. d

I was quite weary of hearing doctrines discussed, but I believed if I were with them when they prayed, I would be able to feel whether they were of the Lord or not. I endeavored to stifle this desire, not knowing how to get to one of their meetings unknown; and if it should be known, I thought it would be reported that I had joined them."

An opportunity for acquaintance with the "Friends of Truth" by and by presented itself unsought for, as Mary Penington thus states :

"One day, as my husband and I were walking in a park, a man that for a little time had frequented the Quakers' meetings saw us as he rode by, in our gay vain apparel. He spoke to us about our pride, at which I scoffed, saying, 'He a public preacher indeed! - preaching on the highways!' He turned back again, saying he had a love for my husband, seeing grace in his looks. His face shined, and he spoke of the light and grace of God that had appeared to all men. My husband and he having engaged in discourse, the man of the house coming up, invited the stranger in. He was young, and perceiving my husband was too able for him in the fleshly wisdom, said he would bring a man next day who would better answer all his questions and objections; (who, as I afterwards understood, was George Fox). He came again the next day, and left word that the Friend he intended to bring could not come; but he believed some others would be with us about the second hour; at which time Thomas Curtis and William Simpson came. My mind had been somewhat affected by the discourse of the night before; and though I thought the man weak in the management of the arguments he brought forward to support his principles, yet many scriptures which he mentioned stuck with me, and felt very weighty. They were such that showed me the vanity of many of my practices; which made me very serious, and soberly inclined to hear and consider what these other men had to say. Their solid and weighty carriage struck a dread over me,

for they came in the authority and power of the Lord to visit us. The Lord was with them, and all we who were in the room were made sensible at that time of the Divine power manifestly accompanying what they said. Thomas Curtis repeated a scripture that struck out all my enquiries and objections, 'This doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'

Immediately it arose in my mind, that if I would for certain know whether or not it was truth which these people upheld, I must do what I knew to be the Lord's will. Much that was contrary to that in me was set before me to be removed. I was shown my want of obedience to what Christ required; and that I must join in with what I knew, before I would be in a capacity to receive and understand what they laid down for their principles."

The effect upon Mary Penington's mind of this application of the text quoted by Thomas Curtis, was not of a transient character. Such of her practices as were contrary to the teaching and commands of the Lord Jesus were brought in review before her by the Holy Spirit, now at work in her heart.

Before the termination of the state of conflict which she had sustained so long, Mary Springett was married to Isaac Penington. Her regard was attracted to him, because, as has been hinted, she perceived that he had discovered the deceit of all mere notions: that, like herself, he refused to be comforted by any form of religion, and was unwilling to rest satisfied short of a heartfelt experience of the power. In this

concern they united, and on her part there was a sincere desire to to be serviceable to him, in his disconsolate condition. Thus they lived together, until the visit from the stranger already mentioned. But previously to this, Mary Penington had heard of a people which had lately risen in the North, and were called Quakers. Consistently, however, with her plan of doubting all professions, she resolved not to inquire after them or their principles; so that it was a year or more before she knew any thing of them, except that they used the singular number in speaking to a single person. She had also seen a book of George Fox written in the plain style, which she accounted ridiculous; and she had likewise heard some false and calumnious reports. She held this people therefore in contempt; nevertheless she often had a secret desire to be with them when they prayed. The reader may recollect that to be acquainted, with the genuine spirit of prayer, was one of her earliest desires; and she now thought that if she were present in the time of prayer, she could feel whether they were of the Lord or not. But she postponed to gratify this inclination, because she knew not how to attend their meetings undiscovered; and if it should be known, she feared that it would be reported, she was inclined to their way, while she herself had no such intention.

It has been already mentioned that Mary Penington has left some account of the particulars, so far at least as they affected herself, of the conference with Thomas Curtis and William Simpson. Her own words will best delineate the situation of her mind at that juncture. " My mind," says she, "was somewhat affected with the man who had discoursed" [with] "us the night before (that is, the-man who had spoken to her husband and herself in the park); for though I judged him weak in managing what he pretended to, yet he mentioned many

weighty scriptures, which dwelt with me, proving from them many things to be right, which I was not in the practice of; and others to be wrong, which I was practicing; and indeed it made me very serious, and quite disposed to hear with attention what these men, (Curtis and Simpson), should say. It immediately arose in my mind, *if I will know whether this is the truth which they have spoken, I must do whatsoever is manifested to be the will of God.* And what was contrary to the Lord in me, as clearly set before me, and I saw that it must be removed before I could be capable of judging the right of their principles. This wrought much in me, to obey what I new was my present business, I now found that my vain inclinations and propensities were much stronger than. I imagined, and that those things which I thought I had treated with indifference yet had great power over me. Terrible was the day of the Lord against all my vain and evil imaginations. This made me continually cry out and mourn, both day *and* night, and if I only ceased a little, then I was, on the other hand, distressed with fears, lest I should be again reconciled to those things which I felt the judgment of God was upon, and which I had detested. Then I cried to the Lord that I might not be left in a quiet and secure state, until all the evil that lodged in my heart was wrought out. Many times has this Scripture been recalled: "But you will not come to me so that you might have life." Then I had a sense of my unwillingness to bear the cross of Christ, so that I was ready to say: *It is true that I am lost if I do not bear the cross, but I will not come because I cannot bear to give up what is so dear to me.* I clearly saw my unwillingness to forsake my beloved lusts that might come unto him for life ; but still upon every painful conflict this was in still in my mind, *That although such severe discipline seemed more than I could bear, yet the wrath of God was greater, and would be far*

*worse.* I set myself against taking up the cross to the language fashions, customs and honors of the world; for indeed my station and connections in life made it very hard; but I never had peace or quiet in mind until the Lord, by the stroke of his judgments, brought me off from all these things, which I found the light to manifest deceit and bondage in. Yet thus to become a fool, and lose my reputation in the world, cost me many tears, many wakeful nights.

The axe being unsparingly brought down on the root of the evil that was within, much painful exercise succeeded. She says :

Terrible was the Lord against the vain and evil inclinations in me, which made me night and day in sorrow; and if it did cease a little, then I grieved for fear I should again be reconciled to the things which I felt under judgment, and which I had then a just detestation of. I never had peace or quiet from sore exercise of mind for many months, until I was by the Lord's judgments brought off from all those things which I found His light made manifest to be deceit, bondage, vanity, and the spirit of the world. The giving up of these things cost me many tears. I felt that by the world I would be regarded as a fool, and that my honorable position must be sacrificed if I took up the cross, and acted contrary to the fashions and customs that prevailed in the world and among my acquaintances. My relations made this cross a very heavy one; but at length I gave up all.

During the mental struggles above alluded to, Mary Penington does not appear to have sought or maintained any intimate acquaintance with the Friends, or to have made a practice of attending their

meetings; but it is most probable she had been reading some of their writings. She states:

A little while after the visit of the Friends before mentioned, one night on my bed it was said to me, "*Be not hasty to join these people called Quakers.*" And after she had given up all her worldly reasoning against the pointing of her own enlightened conscience, she adds, "I then received strength to attend the meetings of this despised people, which I had intended never to meddle with. I found they were truly of the Lord, and my heart owned them and honored them. I then longed to be one of them, and minded not the cost or pain; but judged it would be well worth my utmost cost and pains to witness in myself such a change as I saw in them such power over the evil of human nature. I had heard it objected against them, that they could work no miracles, but I said they did work great miracles, in that they produced such changes, turning those who were in the world and in the fellowship of it from worldly things."

In taking up the cross, I received strength against many things that I once thought it not possible to deny myself. But Oh! the joy that filled my soul at the first meeting held in our habitation at Chalfont. To this day I have a fresh remembrance of it, and of the sense the Lord gave me of His presence and ability to worship Him in that spirit which was undoubtedly His own. Oh! long had I desired to worship Him in the full assurance of acceptation, and to lift up my hands and heart without doubting, which I experienced that

day. In that assembly I acknowledged His great mercy and wonderful kindness, for I could then say, 'This is what I have longed and waited for, and feared I never should have experienced.

Many trials have I been exercised with since then; and all that came by the Lord's ordering strengthened my life in Him, and hurt me not. But once my mind running out in prejudice against some Friends, it did sorely hurt me. After a time of deep and unknown sorrow the Lord removed the prejudice, and gave me a clearness of sight and love and acceptance with His beloved ones.

The Lord has many a time refreshed my soul with His presence, and given me an assurance that I knew that state which He will never leave nor suffer me to be drawn from. Though infirmities beset me, my heart cleaves to the Lord, in the everlasting bond that cannot be broken. While I see and feel these infirmities, I also feel that faith in Him which gives the victory, and keeps me low under a sense of my own weakness. By that grace which is sufficient, I feel and know where my strength lies; so that when I have slipped in word or thought, I have recourse to my Advocate, and feel pardon and healing, and a going on to overcome in watching against what easily besets me. I do believe the enemy cannot prevail, though he is allowed to prove me, that I may have my dependence fixed on the Lord; and be kept on the watch continually, knowing that the Lord alone can make successful war against the dragon. I am thus instructed, by

the discovery of my own weaknesses, to be tender towards those who also are tempted, and taught to watch and pray against temptation. Sweet is this state, though low; for in it I receive my daily bread, and enjoy that which the Lord hands forth continually.

In 1658-four years after her marriage with Isaac Penington, their family consisted of three other children besides Gulielma.

Gulielma Maria Springett, (her daughter by her deceased first husband), then in the fifteenth year of her age was a lovely, graceful girl, the delight of her family and friends.

Thomas Ellwood gives us a peep into the home of the Peningtons at this period, through his graphic description of the first visit he and others of his father's family paid them, after they had settled at Chalfont. The Ellwoods had made the acquaintance of Lady Springett and her daughter in London, several years before her marriage with Isaac Penington. Thomas Ellwood, who was a few years older than Guli, speaks of having been her playfellow in former times, and of having been often drawn with her in her little coach through Lincoln's-inn Fields by Lady Springett's footman.

Ultimately the family left London, and settled at Crowell in Oxfordshire, on the Ellwood estate. Hearing that the Peningtons had moved to Chalfont, the Ellwoods, father and son, went to visit them; and Ellwood in his autobiography speaks of the occasion as follows:

I mentioned before, that during my father's residence in London, in the time of the civil wars, he contracted a

friendship with the Lady Springett, then a widow, and afterwards married to Isaac Penington, Esq. To continue the acquaintance, he sometimes visited them at their country residence at Datchet, and also at Causham Lodge, near Reading. Having heard that they were come to live on their own estate at Chalfont in Buckinghamshire, about fifteen miles from Crowell, he went one day to visit them there and to return at night; taking me with him. We were very much surprised when, coming there, we first heard, then found, they had become Quakers - a people we had no knowledge of, and a name we had until then scarcely heard of. So great a change from a free, debonair, and courtly sort of behavior, which we formerly had found them in, to so strict a gravity as they now received us with, did not a little amuse, and disappoint our expectation of such a pleasant visit as we used to have, and had now promised, ourselves. Nor could my father have any opportunity, by a private conference with them, to understand the ground or occasion of this change, there being some other strangers with them, related to Isaac Penington, who came that morning from London to visit them also.

For my part I sought, and at length found means to cast myself into the company of the daughter, whom I found gathering flowers in the garden, attended by her maid, who was also a Quaker. (Ellwood and Guli had been childhood friends for some years<sup>0</sup>. But when I addressed myself to her after my accustomed manner, with intentions to engage her in some discourse which might introduce conversation, on

the ground of our former acquaintance, though she treated me with a courteous conduct, yet, young as she was, the gravity of her look and behavior struck such an awe over me, that I was not so much master of myself as to pursue any further conversation with her. Therefore, asking pardon for my boldness in having intruded into her private walks, I withdrew, not without some disorder of mind.

We stayed for dinner, which was very handsome, and lacked nothing to recommend it but the want of mirth and pleasant discourse, which we could neither have with them, nor, by reason of them, with one another amongst ourselves; the weightiness that was upon their spirits and countenances keeping down the lightness that would have been up in us. We stayed, notwithstanding, until the rest of the company had taken leave of them, and then we, also doing the same, returned, not greatly satisfied with our journey, nor knowing what in particular to find fault with.

Some time after this, my father, having gotten some further account of the people called Quakers, and being desirous to be informed concerning their principles, made another visit to Isaac Penington and his wife at the Grange, in St. Peter's Chalfont, and took both my sisters and me with him. It was in the Tenth-month, in the year 1659, that we went there on that occasion. We found a very kind reception, and stayed some days, at least one day longer, because while we were there, a meeting was appointed at a place about a mile from there, to which we were invited to go, and willingly went. It

was held in a farm house, called the Grove, which having formerly been a gentleman's seat, had a very large hall, and that was well filled. To this meeting came Edward Burrough, beside other preachers, as Thomas Curtis and James Naylor; but none spoke at that time but Edward Burrough, next to whom, as if it were under him, it was my lot to sit, on a stool by the side of a long table on which he sat. I drank in his words with desire, for they not only answered my understanding, but warmed my heart with a certain heat which I had not until then felt from the ministry of any man.

When the meeting was ended, our friends took us home with them again; and after supper, the evenings being long, the servants of the family who were Quakers, were called in and we all sat down in silence. But we had not sat long before Edward Burrough began to speak, and though he did not speak long, yet what he said touched, I suppose, my father's dwelling place, as the phrase is. He, having been from his youth a believer, though not joined in what is called close communion with any one sort, and valuing himself upon the knowledge he esteemed himself to have respecting the various notions of each profession, thought he had now a fair opportunity to display his knowledge; and thereupon began in making objections against what had been delivered. The subject of the discourse was, 'The universal free grace of God to all mankind.' To this he opposed the Calvinistic doctrine of particular and personal predestination; in defense of which indefensible notion he found himself more at a loss than he expected. Edward

Burrough did not say much to him upon it, though what he said was precise and cogent. But James Naylor interposing, handled the subject with so much lucidity and clear demonstration, that his reasoning seemed to be irresistible; and so I suppose my father found it, which made him willing to drop the discourse.

As for Edward Burrough, he was a brisk young man, of a ready tongue, and might have been a scholar for all I then knew; but what James Naylor said had the greater force with me, because he looked like a plain, simple countryman, having the appearance of a husbandman or shepherd. As my father was not able to maintain the argument on his side, so neither did they seem willing to drive it on to an extremity on their side; but, treating him in a soft and gentle manner, did after a while let the discourse fall, and then we withdrew to our respective chambers.

The next morning we prepared to return home, (that is *my* father, my younger sister, and myself; for my elder sister was gone before by the stagecoach to London), when, having taken leave of our friends, we went forth, they with Edward Burrough accompanied us to the gate, where he directed his speech in a few words to each of us severally, according to the sense he had of our several conditions. When we were gone out and they gone in again, they asked him what he thought of us; he answered them, as they afterwards told me, to this effect : "As for the old man he is set in his ways, and the young woman is light and airy; but the young man is

reached, and may do well if he does not lose it."

It was not very long before the family of Ellwood made another visit at Chalfont. They stayed several days, and attended a meeting in the neighborhood with the family, at which Thomas Ellwood was convinced; but, as it is not the object of this work to detail the history of this Friend, who has himself done it so ably and agreeably, the visit is chiefly mentioned to show the practice of Isaac Penington: namely, in the long evenings of winter, to call in the servants who were Friends, and to sit together in silence. At least this was done at the period of the visit in question.

It is natural, for there is what may be called the nature of spiritual things, it is natural for the humble mind which has long endured conflict, and has been brought through it, not by any inherent strength of its own, to pity those who are still sustaining the warfare ; and to be greatly desirous of stretching out to them the hand of support. Thus it was with Mary Penington. In a visit at the house of Ellwood she observed the sufferings of the son from the temper of the father, on the occasion of remaining covered before him. She remembered what her husband had suffered from his own father, on a like account; and she also remembered that the relation of it to her friend Ellwood had drawn from him, at a time when he did not expect it to be his own case, a heavy censure on the alderman. She had therefore the opportunity of offering some arguments on behalf of the son, not easily to be evaded by the father. Added to this intercession, she desired and obtained the father's permission, that young Ellwood should return with her and her husband in the coach, and remain with them awhile at Chalfont. Great indeed was the love and the kindness of Isaac and

Mary Penington to Thomas Ellwood, while he remained in the family. They were as affectionate parents to him, and as tender nurses in his state of religious childhood. Besides their seasonable counsels, and exemplary conversation, they furnished him with the means of going to other meetings of Friends in the country, when no meeting was held at their house. And Thomas Ellwood asserts that the time he passed in their company was so well spent, that it not only afforded him great satisfaction to his mind, but in good measure turned to his spiritual advantage in the truth. If the woe be attached to those who offend the little ones that believe; surely the blessing will rest on the heads of such as, through their love to the Lord, are sedulous to comfort them.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Imprisonments Begin**

Up to this time, Isaac Penington had escaped what may be termed judicial suffering, It is possible, the rank his father, the alderman, held in the republic might have its share in procuring him this exemption. But on the restoration of Charles II, such a motive had it ever existed, would fail to operate; and the frantic insurrection of the Fifth-monarchy men soon gave the spirit of persecution a pretext for harassing the dissenters, The first notice we have of any imprisonment of Isaac Penington is in the Account of Friends' sufferings, (in 8 v.), where, under the head Buckinghamshire, in the year 1660, it is briefly said that "Five, namely, Isaac Penington, George Salter, Thomas Pewsey, William Sexton, and Edward Barton, were apprehended by the constables when together, and sent to prison for such meeting." The prison was the county goal at Aylesbury, in which we find them remaining on the 30th 11th month (answering to that called January)

1660; together with sixty two others who were chiefly committed for refusing to swear the oath *of* allegiance; but who had for the more part, been taken up when meeting peaceably together. There is a short letter which Isaac Penington wrote during this imprisonment to his young friend Ellwood, then also in confinement at Oxford. It may serve in this place as a specimen of Isaac Penington's mind in the estimating of sufferings, and of the unabated care and affection which he bore to Thomas Ellwood:

Dear Thomas,

Great has been the Lord's goodness to you in calling you out of that path of vanity, and death, in which you were running toward destruction; to give you a living name, and an inheritance of life, among his people; which certainly will be the end of your faith in Him, and obedience to Him, And let it not be a light thing in your eyes that *he* now accounts you worthy to suffer among his choice lambs, that he might make your crown weightier, and your inheritance the fuller. O that that eye and heart may be kept open in you, which knows the value of these things! and that you may be kept close to the feeling of the life, that you may be fresh in your spirit in the midst of your sufferings, and may reap the benefit of them; finding that pared off thereby which hinders the bubblings of the everlasting springs, and makes unfit for the breaking forth and enjoyment of the pure power! This is the brief salutation of my dear love to you, which desires your strength and settlement in the power; and the utter weakening of you, as to yourself: My love is to

you, with dear Thomas Goodyare, and the rest of the imprisoned Friends."

I remain your in the Truth, to which the Lord my God preserve me single and faithful.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Goal, 14th of 12th month, 1660.

Isaac Penington remained in prison a part of the following year; and from Ellwood, who having gained his own liberty from an imprisonment, sometimes visited him in prison, we learn some of the particulars of his treatment there; to estimate which rightly, it should be noticed that he was of a tender habit of body; and his education and manner of life had been those of a gentleman.

Most of the sixty-three prisoners were kept in an old room behind the goal, which had once been a malt-house, but, says Ellwood, then decayed, and scarcely fit for a dog-house. It was also so insecure, that the prisoners might have escaped; and it was, probably, the confidence placed in them, which procured for them this incommodious lodging. Isaac Penington, whether his lodging were in this or another room, for Ellwood in his testimony, calls it a cold and very incommodious room without a chimney, contracted so much disease, his imprisonment being in winter, that for several weeks after he was unable to turn himself in bed. There is something animating in the cheerfulness with which our early friends underwent the rigors of confinement; of which, so far as relates to Isaac Penington, proof will be given as we proceed.

In this confinement he wrote his piece entitled, "*Somewhat spoken to a weighty question, concerning the Magistrate's Protection of the Innocent; in which is held forth the Blessing and Peace, which nations ought to wait for and embrace in the latter days,*" (42 pages). He pleads for an exemption from fighting, for such as are redeemed from the spirit of the world to the spirit of the gospel. "How can he fight with creatures in whom is love and good will towards those creatures; and whose bowels are rolling over them because of their wanderings in the lusts, in the strife, and in the wars?" Yet he asserts the duty of the magistrate to protect not only those who are unable through weakness, but such as are forbidden, by motives of gospel good-will, to fight for themselves. He thus obviates the fear some have had, that a nation of peaceful Christians would be invaded and ruined. Such a thing must have a beginning before it can be perfected. Whoever would see this lovely thing brought forth in the general, must cherish it in the particular. It is not for a nation coming into the gospel-principle to take care beforehand how it shall be preserved: but the Gospel will teach a nation, as well as a particular person to trust the Lord, and wait on Him for preservation. He condemns not, yes, he appears even to be too liberal in allowing, to the magistrate the use of the sword, in repelling invasion or rebellion: but he declares there is a better state, yes, said he, it is far better to know the Lord to be the defender, and to wait on Him daily, than to be ever so strong and skilful in weapons of war. He instances the case of the Egyptians, of Scnnacherib, and of the enemies of Israel, who were restrained, while Israel went to appear before the Lord. "Will he not," says Penington, "defend that nation whom He teaches to leave off war?" The work has several divisions in one of them he states what the Friends desire with reference to government. 1. Universal liberty for all sorts to worship, as Christ shall

open men's eyes to see the truth. 2. That no laws contrary to equity may remain in force, nor any be made but agreeably to equity. There is also a lively address: "To such as have felt the power of the endless life drawing; and have faithfully followed the Leader of the Rock of Israel." This has the date of his prison-house. "From Aylesbury prison in Bucks, where my life breathes for the consolation and redemption of God's Israel, and for the turning of the captivity of the whole creation." The following prayer concludes the pamphlet:

O God of love, who knows the value and price of souls, pity your poor creatures, and put a stop to this course of perishing, in which so many multitudes are overtaken, and pass down to the pit unawares. O your bowels, your bowels, your wonderful bowels! Let them roll in you, and work mightily, and, in the strength of your compassions, bring forth your judgment and your mercy among the sons of men. Build up the tents of Sem; persuade Japhet to dwell therein; and let Canaan become a servant. Preserve the feet of your saints forever. Shut up and silence the wicked one in the darkness. Let not his strength or subtlety prevail against you or your any more; but let the fresh power of your life, and the virtue of your incomprehensible love, redeem, fill, possess, and make glad the heart of your creation for ever. Amen. Amen.

After Isaac Penington was discharged from this imprisonment, he went again to reside at his house at Chalfont, in which there was generally held a meeting twice in the week; but one first-day in four, there was a more general meeting, to which most of the Friends of the

neighboring meetings usually resorted. At one of these general meetings were present, besides the neighboring Friends, a brother of Isaac Penington, named William, who was a merchant of London, and with him a Friend of Essex : there was also the noted George Whitehead of Westmoreland, a man inured to suffering, Thomas Ellwood, and one John Ovy, a baptist teacher, who had desired to become acquainted with Isaac Penington. These came on the preceding day, and were entertained in his hospitable mansion.

The meeting had not long been gathered, and was sitting in great stillness and composure, when a party of horse made its appearance, and the two Peningtons, the Essex Friend, George Whitehead, Thomas Ellwood, and three or four more were taken into custody, and immediately conveyed to a magistrate who resided at a considerable distance. The remainder held their meeting without further molestation.

This seems to have been an arrest made conformably to a proclamation forbidding the meetings of dissenters; which had been issued in consequence of the rising of the Fifth monarchy men; but neither the commander of the soldiers, Matthew Archdale of Wycomb, nor the magistrate, William Boyer of Denhem, appear to have been inclined to persecution. One showed his leniency by apprehending so few ; the other by finding, or contriving, means for discharging those few. He considered Isaac Penington as but at home in his own house; his brother and the Essex man, as naturally on a visit, and the neighboring Friends as persons whom he could easily send for. These therefore he dismissed; but he could find no such excuse for Ellwood and Whitehead, whom therefore he threatened to commit ; but at

length allowed them, as it was too late in the day to send them to Aylesbury, to return home with Isaac Penington, on promise of being ready at his house in the morning; when he took care not to send for them, or molest them any more.

It was not long after this event that Isaac Penington found means to introduce Ellwood as a reader to the poet Milton, who had then lost his sight: which circumstance is probably interesting to the literary world, as Ellwood was the cause of his writing the poem called *Paradise Regained*.<sup>\*</sup> This fixed Ellwood in London, by which means in the year 1662, he underwent imprisonment both in Bridewell and Newgate: and after his release- became Latin tutor to the children of Isaac Penington. Penington was esteemed curious and skilful in pronunciation, and was very desirous to have his children well grounded in their native tongue. For this purpose he had procured for them a veteran, trustworthy teacher, who performed his office to the satisfaction of his employer: but as he aimed no higher, and a successor more learned had not yet been found, Isaac Penington, who then being in ill health kept his chamber, requested Ellwood to enter his children in the rudiments of Latin. He complied; but, instead of a temporary, became a permanent tutor, and stayed nearly seven years with the family.

<sup>\*</sup>When Ellwood was Milton's assistant, immediately after his release from his first imprisonment, he immediately went to Milton and Milton showed him his latest work, *Paradise Lost*. After Ellwood read it, Milton asked him what his opinion was. Ellwood said it was an excellent work on *Paradise Lost*, but asked him what about *Paradise Gained*.

Before the close of 1660, both Isaac Penington and Thomas Ellwood

were made prisoners for obeying their conscience. They were confined in separate prisons, the former in that of Aylesbury, the latter in Oxford, for continuing to attend their own religious meetings. This step resulted from the outbreak of the Fifth Monarchy Men.

From the time of Isaac Penington's release in the early part of 1661, it does not appear that he was molested on account of his religious principles, until the year 1664; but though he himself was at liberty, he did not forget his fellow-prisoners whom he had left, or who had since his release been committed to prison at Aylesbury; for in the 7th month of the year 1661, he went to visit them in their confinement; and while with them, wrote the following letter to king Charles:

O King,

The Lord God of heaven and earth is mighty, who has often and greatly shaken this nation already; and this I have observed, that the seeming settlements, which hitherto have been, since the Lord began to shake, have been but preparative to a further shaking and unsettling. O! happy you could be, if you could wait for, and receive, such a guidance from God, so that your government might be so pure, peaceable, and righteous, as it might need no further shaking by his hand. God sometime raises man from a low estate, and exalts him; but if he forget the Lord, and his heart is lifted up, he is able to bring him down again. O! fear the Lord in the days of your prosperity, and let your heart be abased before Him, and sensible of the need of his preservation. Indeed, it is a hard matter to govern these kingdoms correctly, as the state now stands. You may easily

err and dash upon the rocks. O that the pure eye were open in you; whereby you might see that as you did not gain these kingdoms by policy or strength; so neither can you retain them by those means, but only by the good pleasure of Him who has all the earth at his disposal! I beseech you, in that tender love I bear to you, take heed of going about to plant what the Lord has plucked up; or in endeavoring to pluck up what the Lord has planted. If you look with man's eye, you cannot see what God is doing in the world; and so may easily run a course contrary to his will, and eternal counsel; and O how hazardous must this will be to you! The eternal pence of your soul with God forever, and your prosperity, depend upon your knowing the counsel of the Lord, and upon your obedience to it. O! retire from this world's baits, snares, temptations, allurements and vanities; which draw out and defile the mind; and retreat inward, that the Lord may teach you his fear, and preserve you from those lusts and desires of the fleshly mind, which, being listened to and followed, are very dangerous to the soul, and may prove perilous outwardly also. What shall my love say to you? O that the Lord would speak to you in spirit, and give you an ear to hear, that you might be happy now and forever. Often have my bowels rolled over you exceedingly, even in the day of your adversity, and since your prosperity. O that you could remember God daily, and forget this world! Remember the years of your affliction; and make use of the present day with an humble heart and with a broken spirit. O! do nothing to provoke the Lord against you; for surely his eye is upon you, and his heart ponders all your ways. And bow

before him for his counsel, that you may not arise against your Maker, as the foregoing powers have done; for if He rises up in battle against you, you will no more be able to stand before Him than they were. No, the stronger you are outwardly settled, the greater will the glory of his name be in overturning you. O that you might rule under God, and for God, and not with *that* wisdom, and with *those* self-ends, and are not of Him, and cannot but be against Him. I cannot but desire your good; yes, the very breathings of my heart to the Lord have been often for you; and upon that account singly do I write thus to you, beseeching the Lord, if it is his pleasure, that when that work which is necessary to be done is finished, your eyes may be opened to see the way of righteous government in the true light.

From one who mourns over the misery of mankind, longing for the redemption of those that go astray, and a true lover of your soul.

I. P.

Aylesbury prison, where I am visiting some of my dear Friends in God's eternal truth, 17th 7 mo. 1661

In 1665, religious persecution again disturbed the quiet that had prevailed for the previous few years among the worshippers who weekly assembled in the Penington parlor. Before this disturbance commenced, an illustrious poet, well known to some of the family at the Grange, had determined to seek a retreat in their neighborhood, from the pestilence which was depopulating the capital. This was the

summer of the great plague of London. Every week the the number of its victims was increasing, while death in its most alarming form was spreading terror all around. As many as could leave the doomed city, and were not bound by conscience or by feelings of self-sacrifice to watch over the sick and dying, sought refuge in the country. John Milton, dependent as he was at that time on the sight of others, requested his former pupil to find a house for him near his own home. Thus Ellwood relates the circumstance :- " I was desired by my employer, Milton, to take a house for him in the neighborhood where I dwelt, that he might go out of the city, for the safety of himself and his family, the pestilence then growing hot in London. I took a pretty box for him in Giles Chalfont, a mile from me, of which I gave him notice, and intended to wait on him, and see him well settled in it, but was prevented by that imprisonment." "That imprisonment," will be explained by the following extract from Ellwood's autobiography:- "Some time before this, a very severe law was made against the Quakers by name, particularly 'prohibiting our meetings under the sharpest penalties; five pounds for the first offence so called, ten pounds for the second, and banishment for the third; under pain of condemnation. for felony if escaping or returning without license. This act was looked upon to have been procured by the bishops, in order to bring us to conform to their way of worship. No sooner was that cruel law made, than it was put in execution with great severity. And although the storm it raised fell with greater weight on some other parts, yet we were not in Buckinghamshire wholly exempted from it, as it reached us after a time, For a Friend of Amersham, Edward Perrot, departing this life, the Friends of the adjacent country resorted pretty generally to the burial; so that there was a fair appearance of Friends and neighbors, the deceased having been well beloved by both. After

we had spent some time together in the house, Morgan Watkins, who at that time happened to be at Isaac Penington's, being with, us, the coffin was taken up and borne on Friends' shoulders through the street towards the burying-ground, which was at the town's end, being part of an orchard which the deceased in his lifetime had given to Friends for that purpose.

It so happened that one Ambrose Bennett, a barrister-at-law, and a justice of the peace for that county, riding through the town that morning on his way to Aylesbury, was informed that there was a Quaker to be buried there that day, and that most of the Quakers in the country were coming to the burial. Upon this, he set up his horses and stayed; and when we, not knowing of his design, went innocently forward to perform our Christian duty for the interment of our friend, he rushed out of the inn upon us, with constables, and a rabble of rude fellows whom he had gathered together. Having his drawn sword in hand, he struck one of the foremost of the bearers with it, commanding them to set down the coffin. But Thomas Dell, the Friend who had been struck, being more concerned for the safety of the dead body than for his own, held the coffin fast. The justice observing this, and being enraged that his word, however unjust, was not forthwith obeyed, with a forcible thrust threw the coffin from the bearers' shoulders, so that it fell to the ground in the midst of the street; and there we were forced to leave it, for immediately thereupon the justice gave command for apprehending us, and the constables with the rabble fell on us, and drew some, and drove others into the inn; giving thereby an opportunity to the rest to walk away.

Of those thus taken, I was one and Isaac Penington another. Being

with many more put into a room under a guard, we were kept there until another justice had been sent for to join the other in committing us. Being called forth severally before them, they picked out ten of us, whom they committed to Aylesbury jail, for what neither we nor they knew; for we were not convicted of having either done or said any thing which the law could take hold of." "Our great concern was for our friend Isaac Penington, because of the tenderness of his constitution; but he was so lively in spirit, and so cheerfully given up to suffer, that he rather encouraged us than needed any from us."

The ten Friends thus committed were kept in prison for a month; when that time had elapsed, the doors were opened and they were discharged.

Only four weeks elapsed until Isaac Penington was again imprisoned by order of William Palmer, deputy-lieutenant of the County of Bucks. At the time the order was issued and executed, Mary Penington had not left her room after the birth of one of her children; I believe her youngest son Edward. The mittimus made out by Palmer was to the effect that the jailor of Aylesbury prison "should receive and keep the body of Isaac Penington In safe custody, during the pleasure of the Earl of Bridgewater." This Earl of Bridgewater, as it appears, had conceived a bitter antipathy to Isaac Penington, because he would neither, when addressing him, use the phrase "My Lord," nor sign himself, in writing to him, "Your humble servant." Penington had conscientiously adopted the truthfulness of address advocated by the Friends, and could not call any man "his lord" who was not so; nor call himself the servant of anyone to whom he owed no service. The Earl had declared he should "lie in prison until he would rot," if he would

not apologize to him for the omission, and address him in the manner which he conceived due to his rank.

His fourth imprisonment was in the same year, 1665, about a month after his release from the former. -- Prior to this time his commitment had been by the civil magistrates; but now, that he might experience the severity of each, he fell into the military hands. A rude soldier, without any other warrant than what he carried in his scabbard, came to his house, and told him he came to bring him before Sir Philip Palmer, one of the deputy-lieutenants of the county. He meekly went, and was by him sent with a guard of soldiers to Aylesbury jail, with a kind of mittimus, importing, "That the jailer should receive and keep him in safe custody during the pleasure of the earl of Bridgewater;" who had, it seems, conceived so great, as well as unjust, displeasure against this innocent man, that, although, (it being the sickness year), the plague was suspected to be in the jail, he would not be prevailed with, by the earnest importunity of a person both of considerable quality and power in the county, only to permit Isaac Penington to be removed to another house in the town, and there kept prisoner until the jail was clear. Afterwards a prisoner dying in the jail of the plague, the jailer's wife, her husband being absent, gave leave to Isaac Penington to transfer to another house, where he was shut up about six weeks: after which, by the procurement of the earl of Ancram, a release was sent from Philip Palmer, by which he was discharged, after he had suffered imprisonment three quarters of a year, with apparent hazard of his life, and that for no offence.

By the time he had been at home about three weeks, a party of soldiers from Philip Palmer, (by order of the earl of Bridgewater, as was

reported), came to his house, and seizing him in bed, carried him away to Aylesbury jail again; where, without any cause showed, or crime objected, he was kept in prison a year and a half, in rooms so cold, damp, and unhealthy, that it went very near to cost him his life, and procured him so great a sickness, that he lay weak because of it for several months. At length a relative of his wife's, by an habeas corpus, removed him to the King's-Bench bar, where, (with the wonder of the court that a man should be so long imprisoned for nothing), he was at last released in the year 1668. This was his fifth imprisonment.

His sixth imprisonment was in the year 1670, in Reading jail, whither he went to visit his friends that were sufferers there for the testimony of Jesus. Of which, notice being given to one called Sir William Armorer, a justice of the peace for that county, and living in the town, he was summoned before him, and committed to the jail, becoming a fellow-sufferer with them, whom, being sufferers for the truth, he came to visit. Here he continued a prisoner a year and three quarters, and was brought under the sentence of premunire, [loss of property for lifetime and life imprisonment]; but at length the Lord delivered him.

Isaac Penington's mind was meantime so deeply centered in devotion to the Lord, and in resignation to His holy will in all things, that the prison surroundings were very lightly regarded when compared with the happiness he felt in the assurance that the persecution he was enduring would bring honor and exaltation to the cause of Truth. In humble adoration before God his Saviour, every murmuring thought was hushed, as he wrote to her from whom he was so cruelly separated:-

To his wife:

1st of Seventh Month 1665.

My dear true love,

I have hardly freedom to take notice of what hath passed so much as in my own thoughts; but I am satisfied in my very heart that the Lord, who is good, has ordered things thus, and will bring about what He pleases thereby. Why should the fleshly-wise, reasoning part murmur, or find fault?

Oh! be silent before the Lord all flesh within me, and disturb not my soul in waiting on my God for to perceive what He is working in me and for me, and which He makes these uncouth occurrences conduce into.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, even that I may be His, perfectly disposed of by Him, know nothing but Him, enjoy nothing but in His life and leadings. Thus must I give up and part with even thee, my most dear and worthy love, or I cannot be happy in my own soul or enjoy thee as I desire.

I find my heart deeply desiring and breathing after the pure power of the Lord to reign in me ; yet dare I not choose, but beg to be taught to wait; and to be made willing to drink the residue of the cup of suffering, both inward and outward, until the Lord see good to take it from my lips.

Oh, my dear! say little concerning me; plead not my cause, but be still in your own spirit, and await what the Lord will do for me; that all the prayers which in the tenderness of my

soul I have often put up for thee may have their full effect upon you. My dear, be my true yoke-fellow, helpful to draw my heart toward the Lord, and from every thing but what is sanctified by the presence and leadings of His life.

I feel; and you know that I am, very dearly yours.

I. P.

Notwithstanding the declaration of the Earl of Bridgewater, Isaac Penington's friends, being aware that he had broken no law, calculated on his release whenever the assizes came round. But the Earl, also aware of that fact, took means to prevent a trial. Therefore, when the term arrived, no such case appeared. Thus term after term passed away without any trial, or any notice whatever of Isaac Penington's incarceration. It became evident that the mittimus, made out by the deputy-lieutenant of the county was being literally obeyed, and that the prisoner was really designed to remain imprisoned during the pleasure of the haughty earl.

The following is a letter of loving advice, written by Penington to his persecutor, the Earl of Bridgewater:

FRIEND,

It is the desire of my heart to walk with God, in the true fear of his name, and in true love and goodwill to all men, all my days here upon the earth. For this end, I wait upon God night and day, to know his will, and to receive certain instruction from him, concerning what is acceptable in his

sight. After he has in anything made manifest his pleasure, I wait upon him for strength to perform it; and when he has wrought it by me, my soul blesses him therefore. If this is a tight course, I am not to be condemned herein: if it is not, and you know better, show me, in love, meekness, and tenderness; as I would be willing to make anything known to you, for your good, which the Lord has shown me.

But, this I am fully assured of, that God is higher than man: and that his will and laws are to be set up, and obeyed, in the first place; and man's only in the second; and, in their due subordination to the will and laws of God.

Now, Friend, apply yourself to do what is right and noble, and what is truly justifiable in God's sight; that you may give a comfortable account to him, when he shall call you to himself. That which you have done to me, has not made me your enemy; but in the midst of the sense of it, I desire your welfare, and that you may so carry yourself in your place, and actions, as that you may neither provoke God against you in this world, nor in the world to come. Have you not yet afflicted me enough, without cause? Would you have me bow to you in it, in which the Lord has not given me liberty? If I should give you outward titles and honors, might I not harm you! O come down, be low in your spirit before the Lord! Honor him in your heart and ways, and wait for the true nobility and honor from him. You have but a time to be in the world, and then eternity begins; and what you have sown here, you must then reap. Oh that you might sow, not

to your own will and wisdom, but to God's Spirit; and know his guidance, who is only able to lead man correctly. Indeed, you should be subject in your own heart to that, which you are offended at in others, - even that in the inner parts, which testifies for God and against the thoughts, ways, and works of corrupt man; that you might feel a principle of life from God. and good fruit brought forth from that principle to him; and that the evil nature, with the evil works of it might be cut down in you; that your soul may escape the wrath and misery, which attends the works and workers of iniquity.

I have sent you this letter enclosed, in love. Read it in fear and humility, lifting up your heart to the Lord, who gives understanding that it may be a blessing to you; for. in true love was it written, and is of a healing and guiding nature. I have formerly written to you; but my way has been so barred up that I have not found access easy; and how or whether this will come to your hand. I know not; but, this I truly say to you, I have felt the Lamb's nature, under my sufferings from you, to which I have given you no provocation, neither for the beginning nor continuance of them; and if you can, bring that thing to the trial of the witness of God in your heart, that will deal truly with you, blaming what God blames, and justifying what he justifies. And, though the Lord beholds, and will plead the cause of his innocent ones; (who, the more helpless they are, the more they are considered and tendered by him), yet, I do not desire that you should suffer, either from God or man, on my account;

but, that you might be guided to, and preserved in, what will be sweet rest, peace, and safety, to all that are sheltered by it, in the troublous and stormy hour; in which, the Lora will distress man, and make him feel his sin and misery. This is the sum of what I have at present to say; who have written this, not for any other purpose, but, in the stirrings of true love towards you; and from a true desire, that you might feel the power of God forming in your heart correctly, and bringing forth the fruit of righteousness in you; - that you might be made by him of the seed of the blessed, and inherit the blessing, and find the earthly nature consumed, and brought to nothing in you. For, to [this nature] is the curse, and it must feel the curse, as God brings forth his righteous judgments in the hearts, and upon the heads of the transgressors. And, knowing there is a certain day of God's calling transgressors to account, also the terribleness of his wrath and consuming pleasure in that day, - I warn you in tenderness, and in love beseech you, to consider your ways, and make your peace with him; that you may not be irrecoverably and eternally miserable; but, may be transformed by his life and nature, and sow to him the fruits of it, that you may reap, and receive of him that which is the soul's joy.

And, Friend, know this assured truth, - it is not a religion of man's making or choosing, (neither the Pope's, nor any other man's), but only what is of God, which is acceptable to Him: and, what will become of that man, whose very religion and worship is hateful to God! Where will he stand,

or what account will he be able to give, when he appears before him?

You have not often met with such plain dealing as this. These things very nearly concern you. Oh ! Wait upon God for his true light, that you may not be deceived about them; because your loss thereby, will be so great and irreparable.

I am your Friend in these things, and have written as a true lover and desirer of the welfare of your soul.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail,  
24th of Sixth Month, 1666

While he was in jail, he wrote this very humble, loving letter to George Fox, his spiritual father, who had first convinced him preaching at John Crook's:

Dear G. F.

I feel the tender mercy of the Lord, and some proportion of that brokenness, fear, and humility, which I have long waited for, and breathed after. I feel unity with, and strength from, the body. O! blessed be the Lord, who has fitted and restored me, and brought up my life from the grave. I feel a high esteem and dear love to you, whom the Lord has chosen, anointed, and honored, and of your brethren and fellow-laborers in the work of the Lord.

And dear G. F. I beg your love; I entreat your prayers, in faith and assurance that the Lord hears you, that I may be yet more broken, that I may be yet more filled with the fear of the Lord, that I may be yet poorer, and humbler before the Lord, and may walk perfect humility and tenderness of spirit be Him. all my days.

Dear G. F. you may feel my and wants more fully than my own heart. Be helpful to me in tender love, that I may feel settlement and stability in the Truth; and perfect separation from, and dominion in the Lord over all that it contrary tbereto.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail

15th of 5th month, 1667,

I entreat your prayers for my family, that the name of the Lord may be exalted. and his Truth flourish therein. Dear G. F. indeed my soul longs for the pure, full, and undisturbed reign of the Life, in me.

Prior to this, on his several releases from prison, Isaac Penington had returned to his house, called the Grange, at Chalfont, St. Peter's : but on this release he had scarcely a home to which to resort. His wife relates that they had been injured by their relatives, who, knowing their conscientious scruple to swear, had involved them in a suit in Chancery, where their answer without an oath was invalid. They were also wronged by their tenants, and perplexed with various lawsuits;

but at length the relatives were able to carry their machinations to so great a length that, during the time that Isaac Penington lay in the last mentioned cruel imprisonment, his wife and family were turned out of his house, by the persons who had gotten possession of his estate. By these means the family was broken up. The wife placed herself at Aylesbury, near her husband : and the youthful Gulielma Springett went for awhile on a visit to Bristol. Afterwards the family had lodgings in the adjoining parish called Chalfont St. Giles's, and then moved to more spacious ones at Amersham. During their residence at the former place, the tutor, too, of the children who having been himself fostered in the family, was now taken from them and also committed to prison, by Bennett, the same violent magistrate who the year before had committed both of them to prison. At length the family was located in a suitable habitation.

They were very attached to the friends in the neighborhood of the Chalfonts, whom they had been instrumental in gathering to the knowledge of the Truth, with whom they had suffered, and with whom, no doubt, they had harmonized and rejoiced. They therefore sought a house in that neighborhood; but finding none that seemed to suit them, to lease, and not inclining to make a purchase, the wife proposed that they should go and reside on an estate in Kent, part probably of her own real property, which had not like all her husband's, been taken away by the relatives. Isaac Penington objected to this, for the reasons already mentioned, and because the inhabitants of that part of Buckinghamshire, in which they had so long lived, knew and commiserated their troubles and losses and did not expect their establishment now could be any longer as it had been, or equal to the rank they had held. They had lived in great plenty, but were now

obliged to submit to a much lower style of life than that to which they had been accustomed: and to their neighbors it was almost a matter of surprise that they could still pay to every his what they owed. At length they decided to go and hoard during one summer at Waltham-Abbey in Essex, in order that their children, who about this time lost their domestic tutor by the marriage of Thomas Ellwood, could attend a school in that town run by Christopher Taylor. Near time of their departure for their new lodgings, a Friend who was expressing his regret at losing their society, again proposed to them a small purchase. Mary Penington, who seems comfortable in material matters as well as spirituals, to have been truly a help-mate to her husband, objected greatly to the proposal, and told the person making the proposal that the circumstances of her husband and herself would not permit it. Their friend, however, urged his proposal so strongly, that Mary was induced to go and inspect the premises. It was a small estate called Woodside, near Amersham, of about £30 per annum, with an old house on it: and it had so ruinous and unpromising an appearance, that Mary entirely gave up the thought of the purchase. Soon after this, the worthy couple were disappointed in their expectation of procuring a house at Beaconsfield; on which proposals were again made to them, respecting the estate at Woodside.

Mary Penington's husband left the entire management of the business; so she reset her thinking. " Taking," says she, "some friends with me, I went to see it again. While they viewed the ground, I went into the house. The whole plan was in my mind what to pull down, and what to add. Calculating the whole expense, I judged it might be done by selling an estate of mine in Kent. Next day we went for Waltham, requesting our friends to act in the affair, and write [to] upon it; which

they did; and informed us the title was clear. When I received the message, my mind was set upon the Lord, with desires that if it was if it was the place he intended for us to live, he would make it happen. My husband was very averse to building; yet considering his all was lost, and the estate to be disposed of was mine, he was willing for whatever I wished, providing he had not trouble in building; so we agreed to the purchase. My mind was often engaged in prayer so that I might be preserved from the world's entanglements; and I considered the house to be the Lord's regard for our need and Him for us. When it was bought, When it was bought, I went industriously and cheerfully about the business: but I saw many unusual encumbrances present themselves, which, I still cried to the Lord, that I might go through in his fear, and not darken and encumber my mind. I was, by the surveyor, put upon altering my plan, and raising a part new from the ground. With my husband agreeing with him, I could not well avoid it. So we built the house. But before Isaac Penington could enjoy the new home, he was imprisoned again for 21 months in the jail at Reading.

In the year 1670 was passed that singularly oppressive law, commonly called the Conventicle-Act. It imposed heavy fines on such dissenters as should allow meetings to be held in their houses, and gave unusual powers to magistrate for the levying of these, and other fines which it imposed, and for the imprisonment of such as should become obnoxious to the severity of the law. It also held out great encouragement to informers, and of course the country was soon infested with that pernicious race of men. By the vigilant and reasonable exertions of Thomas Ellwood, who, in nearly the outset of the business in the county of Bucks, procured two informers to be convicted of perjury, Buckinghamshire was not much molested with

this new engine or oppression; but in the neighboring county of Berks, the Friends had their full measure of distress by means of the persecuting law. The jail at Reading was crowded with them, and Isaac Penington going, according to Christian practice, to visit them in their confinement, was informed against before a magistrate who had long signaled himself as a furious persecutor. By this man Isaac Penington was committed to the same prison, disregarding that he had come to sympathize with his brethren already there. We do not in this instance read of his being at any religious meeting, or violating any clause of the late act. It is, however, more than possible that his visit was employed in silent retirement: but the current of persecution at that time raged too violently to be always confined even in legal channels.

In the twenty-one months of Isaac Penington's detention, it is probable that some of the assizes or sessions of trial courts occurred during the period, and Penington was convicted of refusing the oath of allegiance, because it is related by Ellwood, in his testimony that Penington was sentenced to *premunire*. It appears also from Besse's Account of Sufferings, that the magistrate had sent for him, on the information of the jailer, had tendered to him the oath, and had made the refusal the ostensible reason of his treatment. However, when Charles the Second released, by letters patent, such Friends as were imprisoned on suits of the crown, Isaac Penington shared in the benefit, and left, for the sixth and last time, the confinement of a prison. A fellow-sufferer, in several of his imprisonments, gives the following description of his conduct in those trying situations:

Being made willing by the power of God to suffer with great patience, cheerfulness contentedness, and true nobility of

spirit, he was a good example to me and others. I do not remember that ever I saw him cast down, or dejected in his spirit, in the time of his close confinement, nor did he speak harshly of those that persecuted him; for he was of that temper as to love enemies, and to do good to those that hated him, having received a measure of this virtue, from Christ his master, that taught him what to do. Indeed I may say, in the prison he was a help to the weak, being made an instrument in the hand of the Lord for that end. O! the remembrance of the glory that did often overshadow us in the place of confinement; so that indeed the prison was made by the Lord, who was powerfully with us, as a pleasant palace! I was often, with many more, by those streamings of life that did many times run through his vessel, greatly overcome with the pure presence, and overcoming love of our God, that was plentifully shed abroad our hearts.

AFTER the settlement of Isaac Penington at Woodside he suffered no further religious persecution. His constitution had been greatly impaired by the treatment he had previously endured, but the latter years of his life passed on peacefully, his affectionate wife watching carefully over his declining health. Their children grew up around them with indications of piety which made their parents' hearts thankful, and hopeful in view of the future. William and Gulielma Penn were near enough to ensure occasional fellowship between the two families; and we may imagine how happy the fellowship must have been between such cultivated religious minds, bound together as they were by the closest ties of love and relationship.

It is pleasant to know that in life's evening the family at Woodside were suffered to enjoy without molestation the peace and comfort of their humble home. It was not on what they lost of this world's wealth that the father and mother were then disposed to dwell, but on what they had gained in the sense of Divine approval, and the assurance of the Lord's presence being with them and their children. This added far more to their happiness than all the wealth the world could bestow. In true thankfulness and contentedness they could praise their Heavenly Father's care, which had circled around them amid fierce persecution, and love filled their hearts with love and devout trust in Him.

In the autumn of 1679 both husband and wife went into Kent to Mary Penington's native place; and, after visiting the tenant on her estate there, they remained a short time at one of the farms called Goodenstone Court. Just at the time they had fixed to return to Woodside, Isaac Penington took ill. His disease was one of acute suffering, and in a few days the closing scene of earthly life arrived. His soul ascended to its home on high, and **his wife tells us her spirit was allowed at that moment to join his, and rejoicingly to see the Heavenly mansion prepared for him.**

His remains were interred in the burial-ground belonging to his beloved friends of Chalfont at Jordans, where a small white headstone now marks the spot with the name and date, " Isaac Penington, 1679." His age was sixty-three.

Mary Penington of her dearly departed beloved husband:

While I keep silent touching you, Oh! you blessed of the

Lord and His people, my heart burns within me. I must make mention of you, for you were a most pleasant plant of renown, planted by the right hand of the Lord; and you took deep root downwards, and sprang upwards. The dew of heaven fell on you, and made you fruitful, and your fruit was fragrant and most delightful.

"Oh, where shall I begin to recount the Lord's remarkable dealings with you! He set His love on you, oh ! you who were one of the Lord's peculiar choice. Your very early childhood days declared of what stock and lineage you were. You desired the 'sincere milk of the word as a new-born babe,' even in the bud of your age; and who can declare how you had traveled towards the Holy Land in the very infancy of your days? Who can tell what your soul felt in your travel? Oh the heavenly, bright, living openings that were given you! God's light shone round about you. Such a state as I have never known of in any other, have I heard you declare of. But this it will please the Lord to withdraw, and leave you desolate and mourning weary of the night and of the day - naked and poor in spirit - distressed and bowed down. You refused to be comforted, because you could not feed on that which was not bread from heaven.

In that state I married you; my love was drawn to you, because I found you saw the deceit of all notions. You remained as one who refused to be comforted by anything that had only the appearance of religion, until 'He came to

His temple who is Truth and no lie.' For all those shows of religion were very manifest to you, so that you were sick and weary of them all.

This little testimony to your hidden life, my dear and precious one, in a day when none of the Lord's gathered people knew your face, nor were in any measure acquainted with your many sorrows, have I stammered out, that it might not be forgotten. But now that the day has broken forth, and that you were so eminently gathered into it, and a faithful publisher of it. Leave this other state of yours to be declared by the sons of the morning, who have witnessed the rising of the bright star of righteousness in you, and its guiding you to the Savior, even Jesus, the First and the Last. They, say, who are strong, and have overcome the evil one, and are fathers in Israel; you have declared of your life in God, and have published it in many testimonies."

Ah me! he is gone! he that none exceeded in kindness, in tenderness, in love inexpressible to the relation of a wife. Next to the love of God in Christ Jesus to my soul, was his love precious and delightful to me. My bosom one! my guide and counselor! my pleasant companion! my tender, sympathizing friend! as near to the sense of my pain, sorrow, grief and trouble, as it was possible! Yes, this great help and benefit is gone; and I, a poor worm, a very little one to him, compassed about with many infirmities, through mercy was enabled to let him go without an unadvised word

of discontent or inordinate grief. No, further, such was the great kindness the Lord showed me in that hour, that my spirit ascended with him that very moment the spirit left his body, and I saw him safe in his own mansion, and rejoiced with him there. From this sight my spirit returned again, to perform my duty to his outward tabernacle.

This testimony to Isaac Penington is from the greatest loser of all who had a share in his life,

"MARY PENINGTON."

Written at my home at Woodside, the 21th of 2nd month,  
1680

***Site Editor's Comment : Isaac Penington lives in his immortal words of praise, hope, faith, and love. His letters and writings will be read for encouragement and inspiration as long as the English language is alive. I am humbled by the strength of his love and the measure of his Christhood. He remains a blessing to us all. May we praise and thank the Lord for such a humble servant's record being kept alive for us to savor and enjoy!***