

**Milk for Babes:
and
Meat for Strong Men.**

**A Feast of Fat Things;
Wine Well Refined on the Lees.**

Being the breathings of the Spirit through
his Servant, **James Naylor**, written by him in
the time of the confinement of his outward
man in prison.

EDITED BY EVAMARIA HAWKINS
MODERNIZED FROM THE 1661 EDITION

Evamaria Hawkins is a member of Bethesda Friends Meeting, (BYM) and was a member of several English Meetings before moving to the States 40 years ago. She has been interested in the life and writings of James Naylor for several years, and has led workshops within her Yearly Meeting area.

It was in the process of trying to introduce modern Friends to Naylor's writings, that she began modernizing the texts she was using. This pamphlet is the largest of the texts she used.

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INTRODUCTION

James Nayler (sometimes spelled Naylor), was one of many leaders of what is now called The Religious Society of Friends. In the early 1650s when this movement was starting in England, they called themselves Children of the Light and detractors referred to them as “Quakers”. George Fox is generally credited with being the founder of this group, but his discovery “that there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition” is one that many other people were reaching or had reached. Fox drew them together, and later developed the organizational structure that has endured to this day. This structure enabled the group to survive whereas many other religious groups of that time did not.

The leadership in the very early days was a group leadership; the real leader was seen to be God, with men and women trying to follow their leadings as they saw them. Amongst this group James Nayler was one of the ablest speakers and writers. He was born of Yorkshire farmers in 1618 and married in 1639, when he moved to a farm of his own. He served in the Parliamentary army from 1643 to 1651, entering the cavalry as a corporal. By 1644 he had been promoted to quartermaster, a rank that gave him a seat on the council of officers.¹ During this time he was reported to be a powerful preacher, drawing large crowds. Sometime in 1651 he was given a medical discharge and returned home. After his recovery he met with George Fox on a nearby farm, and subsequently, according to his own report, he heard a call to an itinerant ministry while at the plow. As a result he left home and family and traveled widely

in the north of England with other early Quaker leaders. Their preaching led to many imprisonments and he started his prolific writing.

In 1654 he went to London to help with the ministry, and soon became a very successful preacher there too. A group of people who wanted him to be the leader developed, and this caused a quarrel with Fox. Readers are advised to read the story in one of several good books on his life.² The quarrel did not redound to either man's credit; two men who had previously been good friends and who were both of great spiritual perception and depth behaved in a very petty manner.

The best known event in his life is his ride into Bristol in 1656, in the manner of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Understanding this event is difficult, but knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Friends at that time is necessary if we are to make an attempt at this. "Enacting signs" was not uncommon; early Friends followed the traditions of the prophets who had performed dramatic actions to make their point. It was also a time of great apocalyptic expectations.³

His action in Bristol led to his trial by Parliament rather than the local court because the magistrates thought that they had the leading Quaker and silencing him would end the spread of Quakerism. He was found guilty of "horrid blasphemy" and sentenced to a very cruel punishment, followed by solitary imprisonment at hard labor. His actions and punishment reflected badly on the group as a whole and increased his estrangement from the Children of the Light. As a part of his sentence he was forbidden the company of all men and women and the use of pen and paper. Knowing what a powerful writer he was, Parliament did not want him to be in communication in any way. Eventually he did manage to get writing materials, and he was able to get letters out to Friends in which he tried, successfully, to be reconciled with the group. After his

release from prison, late in 1659 in a general amnesty, he went back to work among Friends in London. After a few months George Fox agreed to a meeting at which Fox made Nayler kneel to him. These were men who had been imprisoned for refusing to take their hats off for anyone because we are all equal before God, but Nayler did kneel, which shows how much he had grown during his imprisonment and how much he wanted to be reconciled. In October 1660, on his way to Yorkshire to visit his home, he was attacked and left injured in a ditch. A local Friend found him and nursed him, but Nayler died a few days later.

George Fox gave Nayler very few references in his journal, although the two men had been good friends, sometimes traveling together, and sometimes in prison together. Nayler's contributions to the work in those early years are not mentioned by Fox, but can be documented from the early correspondence. Some of his later writings were not published until after his release from prison, but it was only in 1716, when George Fox had long been dead that George Whitehead put together a collection of James Nayler's works. It is not a complete collection, Whitehead did do some editing. Except for an American edition of the same collection which was published in 1829, Nayler's work has not been re-published.⁴ In more recent years a few of his letters and pamphlets have been published, some in whole, some as extracts, but very little of his work is known.

I have found Nayler's writings have enriched my understanding of Quaker concepts. It has given them a new, revitalized meaning. Nayler emphasizes the Light (the Inner Light is a much later phrase) as something that is available to all of us. We are given our measure, and by faithful attention to it our measure will grow. Nor was the Light seen as a warm and fuzzy experience. It can be a source of enlightenment and encouragement and Divine revelation, but it can also be demanding, and if we let it,

may burn away our impurities, not necessarily a pleasant experience.

During the latter part of his imprisonment Nayler wrote *Milk for Babes*, which is an instructional piece, giving spiritual guidance and advice that is still relevant today. It contains many of the threads that appear in his earlier writings, but it also contains elements that probably came from his experiences in his last imprisonment. Parts of it indicate that he struggled through great suffering and found not only that his faith could sustain him, but that, with the help of the Light, growth and healing are possible. Although it is addressed to a general public, this is also a very personal statement.

It is also very much a product of the 17th century. Nayler's religious language is derived from the Bibles with which he would have been very familiar, the Geneva Bible and the King James Version. As with others of his time, this was the only language he used. Nayler's writing is steeped in Biblical imagery; there are layers of metaphor and meaning embedded in the text. Christopher Hill, in his book *The English Bible in the Seventeenth Century Revolution*, shows how much the Bible was used to support certain positions. It was also used as metaphor: what could not be said for fear of persecution could be alluded to and everyone would know the meaning. We miss much of this because we do not have the same familiarity with the Bible.

Many Puritan ideas of that time are taken for granted by Nayler, though Quakers differed on a number of important points, one of the main ones being the perfectibility of human beings. Perfectibility does not mean that humans are perfect. Quakers held that the Light shows us the way to perfection; therefore it is theoretically possible to reach perfection. This is how Nayler explained it in a pamphlet: "It is true, the Light is but manifest in the creature by degrees, but the least degree is perfect in its

measure, and being obeyed, will lead . . . up to perfection all that perfectly follow it.”⁵ How far we go along that road is up to us. This is a very different message from the Puritan doctrine of predestination. While Nayler has much to say about sin and Satan, the sinner is not condemned to eternal damnation. The need for a daily personal struggle away from evil and towards good were themes in all the early Quaker writing, as was the need to be attentive to the Light, which will show us what is good and what is evil, and will also show us the way to overcome the evil in us. This is essentially a very optimistic message, which gave the seventeenth century reader much hope. It can do the same for us.

Worldly things were seen to be evil, as was self will. Both are the work of Satan. The concepts of Satan, and of sin being associated with the “earthly” or “fleshly” aspects of life, can be a stumbling block to many modern readers, including myself. I would suggest that we accept this as part of his historical background and times, and then try to interpret it in terms that have meaning for us today. Sin is anything that blocks us from the Divine, and I do not find it necessary to spend time wondering about the source of evil and the existence of Satan. Although I had not thought in terms of Satan, it seems obvious that something interferes with our desire for God and stops or slows down our movement towards spiritual growth. I do not choose to call it Satan.

These days we do not consider worldly or fleshly aspects of our lives as innately evil, but rather as gifts and blessings. These blessings can be misused and can then block our striving toward the Divine. There is much in our world that is not wholesome; we need only look at the emphasis on consumerism, violence, and sex, on our impact on the environment, and on our contribution to the unequal sharing of resources, to name a few unwholesome

directions. It seems perfectly consistent to take the modern view of the worldly and fleshly aspects of our lives as gifts, while allowing the possibility that sometimes misuse of these physical gifts has crept in. The early Friends waited for the Light to show them these impurities and the way to purge them. Greed, jealousy, pride, envy, etc. are still problems with which we have to deal. Self will is also recognized by many modern authors as being a stumbling block that gets in the way of listening to and following Divine guidance. While maintaining this early emphasis on the sinfulness of the world, early Friends did not withdraw from the world. They were much involved in trying to right the evils of their day and did not hesitate to speak out and to lobby Parliament, Oliver Cromwell, and later the king.

Nayler and all the early Friends took basic Christianity for granted. They used the word “Christ” with many meanings. Joseph Pickvance in *A Reader’s Companion to George Fox’s Journal* gives more than 3 pages of references to the different uses of the word. Some modern Friends have problems with the use of this word, and I suggest that they can substitute one of the many other words possible. Marcus Borg in a lecture a few years ago answered a question about the Trinity with the following explanation: the Trinity shows three aspects of the same fact. Because people are different, they need different ways to worship, so some worship the Divine by the path of the Father, some by the Son, and some by the Holy Spirit. It is up to each one of us to find the right path for us, and to use the language that goes with it. On the other hand, we are not free to criticize the use of other paths or language from ours, and in that vein I would suggest that we accept Nayler’s language as appropriate for him and his times without letting it block us from his message.

The main theme of this piece is that the Divine Principle that calls us will also show us the way and help

us as we struggle to give up the things that hold us back. He points out that whatever we choose as our redeemer out of trouble, that will be our master, so make sure you choose Christ and His gentleness and patience. Satan will try to show us easier ways, but wait for advice from God rather than easier answers from other sources. When we have learned the mystery of godliness we may be able to help others. A quickening power is with us which will be our strength. Don't rush out of any doubts, allow time for God's work, or the old spot may remain, only to return. (I find this very good advice in these days of wanting instant fixes.)

Nayler talks of two seeds. One is sown while we sleep and takes root in pleasure, ease and delight, and one is sown with tears and brought to light with mourning. (I assume this is mourning for the wrongs we have done, the hurts we have inflicted.)

We have been shown the foundation of the Kingdom, and our work is to resist whatever would keep us from coming to this foundation. We are to fight against deceits, "airy notions," and spirits that would hold us with empty words and forms and do not have the power of righteousness.⁶

He warns us to be attentive to that which calls in the wandering mind, not to be distracted, to sink down to the springs of living virtue, and then we will come to meet the Lord in His Kingdom, and then we will be shown what blocks us and the way to overcome it. We must put away old idols and fight whatever interferes with our desire for God. Satan is portrayed as a vigorous fighter,⁷ and we must fight against him with the Lamb.⁸

He then warns us again to beware of haste and conceit, to be steadfast and faithful, and assures us that we will be built up if we wholly exercise our minds and do not allow

things to block us off. The whole mystery of godliness will be revealed. If we are continually open to Him we will become improvers of what we have received. Finally we are warned not to look back, not to hanker after things we have let go. They will overtake us again if we let them.

Although Nayler is considered one of the best writers among the earliest of Friends, his writings are extremely difficult for the modern reader because of the very long sentences, long paragraphs, obsolete language and usage, and repetitiveness. I have worked from the 1829 edition, which I have compared with the original 1661 edition and where they differ I have used the 1661 wording. My attempts not to modernize the language too much led my support committee to send me back to do several re-edits. As a result this is a somewhat abbreviated text; many of the repetitions have been cut out (short cuts are indicated with . . . longer omissions are shown by a whole line of dots); usage and spelling have been modernized, as have the punctuation and paragraphing. Headings have been added which were not in the original text. My hope is that this text makes Nayler's writing accessible while keeping the essential elements. However, this is not an "easy read"; it will still take effort and concentration as well as several re-reads. It need not be attempted in one session but can yield rich rewards if read in sections. It has also been my experience that it is helpful to read this material out loud. Nayler wrote as he spoke, and he was reported to have been a powerful speaker.⁹

The original pamphlets were printed and produced very cheaply and were then sold to the general public, at street corners and through Friends. They were the subject of popular debate and discussion, as religious matters were also seen as political matters; the two were not as separate as they are now. It is my hope that this pamphlet version will help to popularize one of James Nayler's major writings.

Two contemporary readers have contributed their meditations, which will be found at the end of Nayler's text. I want to thank Stephanie Koenig and Ann Lewis for their thoughtful contributions which will, I hope, show how two people have approached this text and made it relevant to them. There are many other connections to be made, and I would encourage the reader to stay with the text and to meditate, journal, discuss, or whatever else helps you to mine its riches.

I also want to thank Sally Wriggins for giving me her copy of the 1829 edition of the *Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles, and Papers, written by James Nayler; with an Impartial Relation of the Most Remarkable Transactions Relating to His life*. Her generosity in sending me this book on a very slight acquaintance has made this work possible and I cannot thank her enough.

I must also thank Liz Kamphausen for introducing me to the writings of James Nayler at a workshop at Pendle Hill, and Bethesda Friends Meeting (MD) for embracing my leading to bring the life and writing of Nayler to the Meetings within my Yearly Meeting and for giving me a committee for nurture and oversight. The members of this committee have been a great support and help and I appreciate all that they have done to further this work. I also want to thank all the readers, too numerous to mention, who have given me their comments which have considerably improved the finished product. Last but not least I want to thank Ted Hawkins for the long hours he has spent helping me to proofread my original copying of the 17th century text into the computer (these very old pages cannot be scanned), and for much other help and general support he has given me in countless ways to encourage this work.

Evamaria Hawkins

Notes:

- 1 Neelon, David. "James Nayler in the English Civil Wars." *Journal of Quaker Studies*, 6/1(2001) [pp8-36] England
- 2 See bibliography: Damrosch has made a very scholarly and detailed study of Nayler's life and writing. Ingle also gives a detailed account of the quarrel between Nayler and Fox in his book on Fox.
- 3 See bibliography for descriptions and explanations of Friends enacting signs as well as the belief in the imminence of the apocalypse. See especially Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, Chapter 6, on enacting signs.
- 4 Licia Kuenning of Quaker Heritage Press is currently editing *The Works of James Nayler*, in 4 volumes. The first will be available shortly.
- 5 From *A few words occasioned by a paper lately printed, styled a Discourse Concerning the Quakers*.
- 6 This was a warning against the rituals etc. of the established churches, but could equally apply to a number of modern semi-religious practices.
- 7 C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* sees him this way too.
8. The Lamb's War was a common phrase in the mid seventeenth century, in fact Nayler wrote a long piece by that name. It is available in Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings 1650 - 1700*, pp102-116
- 9 I would be happy to supply a copy of the complete 1661 text to any interested reader.

Milk for Babes:
AND
Meat for Strong Men.
A
F E A S T
O F
F A T T H I N G S,
WINE *well refined on the LEES.*

O Come young Men and Maidens, old Men and Babes,
and drink abundantly of the Streams that run from the
Fountain, that you may feel a Well-Spring of living Wa-
ter in your selves, springing up to Eternal Life; that as he
lives (even Christ Jesus) from whence all the Springs do
come, so you may live also, and partake of his Glory that
is asceded at the right hand of the Father, far above Prin-
cipalities and Powers.

Being the breathings of the Spirit through his Servant
JAMES NAYLOR, written by him in the time of
the confinement of his outward man in prison; but not
published till now.

London, Printed for Robert Bayly, at the sign of the black-spread
E. and W. in St. Dunstons Church-yard, 1681.

The Divine Principle which calls you will also show you the way and help you as you struggle to give up the things that hold you back.

My soul is with you tender hearted ones, who have felt the call of the Father's love, who now see more attraction and beauty in innocence and gentleness than in all the mountains of prey, or in self-conceited exaltations arising from airy knowledge. Wait low in that which has given you the sight of this excellence, and diligently listen to it, until the thing itself springs up, which naturally has these riches in it, and which comes from above. Yet it is felt far below all fleshly affections, high thoughts, and hasty desires, and by these it is veiled and hid from you. You cannot come to the life and spring of it, unless you deny these and put them off, by sinking down through all these earthly foundations, and then by rising up. For your Beloved suffers while these are above in your minds, and through the fall of all these must He arise, and over all these must He take the Kingdom, before you come to have a quiet dwelling place in Him, and He in you. So under all these you must pass, and into the likeness of His death you must come, ... that the fellowship of His sufferings you may feel and partake of the kindness and patience of Him who bears all things. Your faithfulness with Him in this must be thoroughly tested. In this faith and patience you shall learn Him whom you love, His reproach without, His temptations within, even such trials as cannot be declared to another shall you learn in Him. With His love, obedience, patience, and long-suffering under all you will learn how He

arises through all these, in which resurrection He chains His enemies, and takes those captive whose captives you were. Thus shall you have fellowship in His resurrection, in which you shall attain to the resurrection of the dead, and the inheritance of eternal life.

You will be rejected by all, but keep the faith, even if you cannot see where you are going.

But dear children, who seek to accomplish this, think it not strange, when, for the achieving of this, you come to be rejected by all, denied, condemned, contradicted. You will be tempted with all manner of spirits and evils, with assaults within and without, with fears and dread, in weakness, watchings, and fastings, with tears of sorrow night and day. You will be led into the wilderness, and there tempted, tried in the night with great temptations and see no way out. You will be led on a way you know not, a way of wrath and terror, passing by the gates of hell with none to pity you, nor take your part, chastened alone, that you may be tested to the uttermost.

When you come into this, then faint not, nor look back, but lift up your head through all, and know, that now He deals with you as with sons and daughters of His love. Take heed you murmur not, nor measure Him with yourselves, nor complain of the rod. Cast not your evil eye upon the instruments, who or what they may be; for that will beget anger in your minds, and then you will lose the life you aim at, and suffer in vain. In the greatest floods keep your eye to your Beloved, retain patience and gentleness in long-

suffering with faith. Let these be ever in your heart as the end of all; and still believe that all that befalls you is but to destroy that which would hinder you from being joined unto Him you so highly prize.

Without Him you can do nothing. Hear Him alone.

So in all things keep with Him, let His joy be strength unto you in all, and the appearance of His beauty will refresh you in the new, as the old does waste. With Him make war against the enmity, and let His love quench all anger that would arise. Let Him be your shield of faith. Then whatever you are led into while you retain Him single in your minds, it shall be profitable to the end expected, but without Him you can do nothing. If you pray to the Father, let it be with Him. In all your wrestlings, His gentleness, patience, and long suffering, with faith, prevail much with God. If you resist the tempter, let it be in Him. Only His good has power to overcome the evil, here is your strength in all. If you hold Him steadfast in your minds, in the fire and in the floods He will be with you, and be your power and peace, and make your way through all.

Though at some times the clouds may be so thick, and the powers of darkness so strong in your eye that you see Him not, yet love Him, and believe, and you have Him present. You shall feel His patience calling you down out of the storm, and His kindness moving you to follow Him who has gone the same way before in all His saints. This is your Beloved, who now goes before you. Hear Him alone; you are faithful when you look

for no other to be with you in all, nor to redeem you out of all, but Him whom you love. Though the tempter should tender you relief some other way (for with this he will test you, if he sees he cannot drive you from the gentle and patient One by sufferings and threatening, then will he flatter and promise, to draw you from Him), yet this is your faithfulness, that you abide till gentleness and patience bring you through.

Whatever you choose for your redeemer out of trouble, that must be your lord and master, and you its servant. Therefore take heed you own none for a helper, but Him whom you look to inherit. He that makes flesh his arm, inherits the curse, and the earth comes over him, and he must serve it: but stay you in the gentleness of Christ, in His peace and patience, and you will receive the assurance of your inheritance in the day of your trouble. When you come out, none shall be able to take it from you, nor any contrary nature shall be lord in you, nor over you, but He in whom you have trusted shall rest upon you, and His glory shall cover you, and He shall become your life and leader for ever.

If you are faithful in this trial, you shall learn Christ and find out the wiles of Satan.

If you are faithful in this trial, you shall learn Christ and find out the wiles of Satan, and perfectly feel what he has of his own in you to work upon, even by his present working in your minds. That part of you which thinks sufferings hard and time long is not to be trusted, for it will work a distrust in your reasonings, and tempt you

to look out for freedom and ease by some visible help.... If any carnal way be opened, it will form a fair pretense as though it were of God, which is not of God. This ... would part you from your chaste waiting upon Him whom you love, taking his advantage by your haste, weariness, and weakness in the journey.

Wait for that which only minds to be obedient to God, ... thinking it a greater thing to obtain counsel from Him than ease from another, believing that no other can give an expected end but Him.... Therefore count nothing dear that you may win Him, thinking no time long, nor anything hard to endure, for the joy and beauty that is set before you.... Your freedom will be perfect, and your inheritance large, when all that would not stay upon Him alone is consumed in the fiery trials, which haste, ease, and distrust will never bring to an end. Until then you are not fit to be joined to Him you love, in ever-living obedience and everlasting praises, which is the portion of all who have waited on Him, and have found Him faithful in the end.

When you have learned this mystery of godliness and found the worth of it, having found His way perfect and pure, and Him faithful to such as walk in it, you may be able to direct the simple and unlearned in the desirable way to rest, and your words may have in them a manifestation of life.

A quickening power is with you which is your everlasting strength.

A quickening power is with you: you are redeemed with that you so dearly loved, and this shall be your everlasting strength....

... The more diligently you wait upon Him in all conditions you pass through, even so the more do you receive of Him. By drinking in of that heavenly virtue that is in Him, who is the gentle and patient one, and by supping continually with Him, and He with you, you will come so to be filled with Him that all haste, and impatience and distrust will be ... overcome with Him, till He become your whole life; and all your thoughts, words and actions have their rise and being in Him; so that self be seen no more, nor that appear in which death or condemnation have any entrance or power.... Those who are thus built, see no more sorrow nor fear of falling, the foundation being everlasting, ... and precious, and every stone in it tried in the fire, and in faithfulness chosen for that end.

So with all diligence sink down to feel the salvation, not paying attention to that which boasts in high words before it be tried, but when it comes into the fire, will not stand patiently in the trial. Through that being given up to death, seek for that which lies under in the suffering, which calls you down from every high thought. To Him come down into the pit, to Him who bears all things without complaining, that with Him you may suffer, and with Him you may obey, and in all things He may be with you, and you with Him.... Though you go down into the lower parts of the

earth in the carnal body, He shall raise you spiritually. Though you are sown weak, yet shall you be raised in power if you rise only with Him as He raises you. If you cast not off the yoke, nor flee the cross, nor heal your own wound, even though your wound be mortal, the cure is immortal. Though you go down in shame and reproach, yet you will be raised in glory, and covered with immortal honor and eternal life, with power and strength to fulfill the will of God, and you will have the answer of a good conscience. Through this baptism and resurrection you shall attain, and so become one in spirit with Him that dwells in the Light.

.....
 So, being faithful in the Light, you shall learn Him that kills and makes alive, that casts down and raises up, that condemns and justifies, and so shall you know the way of death and the way of life....

Be patient; what is not consumed in the fire will be a continual canker.

Therefore, brethren, in the Light be faithful, ... take heed of doubt, and haste not out of it ... lest you provoke Him to leave chastening, and so your spot remain, and you prove but bastards, and not free-born children of His Kingdom, Power and Glory; and so in time your old iniquities overtake you again.

For whatever of the old man comes out of the fire unconsumed, dead and buried in this baptism, will be a continual canker ... and an enemy, daily waiting its opportunity upon all

occasion to get up, and overspread the pure plant of innocence. It will cheat you of your Beloved, and so make void all your past sufferings, and bring in the old evils like a flood upon you, as it has befallen many at this day. But be faithful to the end of all injustice, the root as well as the branch, so shall your righteousness arise clear and unspotted, and your old sins shall therewith be buried, and never rise again, neither to accuse nor reign. This is your victory over death.

Let none deceive you; whatever others imagine, you should know that though sin (the evil seed) be sown when men sleep, it takes root with pleasure and springs up with ease and delight, yet its end is bitterness and great tribulation. The precious seed is sown with tears, conceived in sorrow, and brought to light with sighing, nights of watching, days of mourning. With much labor of spirit and travail of soul must you come to see your desire.

You have received a sight of the cornerstone. Fight whatever would keep you from coming to this foundation.

The world has conceived a faith in the air, and so brings forth nothing but several sorts of winds striving upon the earth without foundation, and so builds nothing to perfection. With you it must not be so, for to you the Light is sprung up, which leads to the foundation of God.

You have received a faith that gives you a sight of the stone which the builders see not. To you it is given, not only to believe in Him, but to suffer for His sake on behalf of Him, so to run as to win

Him, so to strive as to obtain Him, His name, His power, His nature. This is what your souls groan for: to possess and inherit His power, His love, His gentleness, His patience in all tribulations, His faith in all fears, and to have the power of His grace and virtue living in you. Thereby you may be men of able spirits, rightly furnished to every good work and against all evil, that in Him you may overcome when you are tried, and be more than conquerors.

Your work is to war against whatever would keep you from coming to this foundation and cornerstone. It is not beating the air that will fight your battle, for you are to fight against all deceits, and against airy notions and all spirits that would possess you with words and forms but without the power of righteousness, and against whatever lies under the power of sin. The true Light gives you to see the cursed deceit that lies in all this, and that these are the subtle paths of the destroyer; and nothing less than victory over sin and subtlety will satisfy your souls... Therefore yours is work, and not vain words. That which strikes at the root of sin is your best weapon. So it is not flesh that profits you, it is the Spirit that must, through hardship, quicken that which ease has slain before you come to perfect peace.

.....

Be attentive to that which calls in the wandering mind.

With all diligence press into that which calls in the wandering mind, and give heed with watching and wrestling to abide in it. As you are

faithful in it, it will be enlarged, till it become a habitation for your pure mind to dwell in, and take up its rest.... By killing in the watch all that would draw you out, and sinking down into this gentleness and steadfast lowliness, you will come to feel the plant of God that brings forth this gentleness and holiness, and you will feel springs of living virtue, and there you will meet the Lord in His Kingdom on earth, where He delights to walk as in a garden.... There wait to feel His fellowship, and receive His counsel in purity and coolness, in which He will let you see whatever it be that would break His covenant with you and whatever leads out from the eternal life. He will, with His Spirit, lead you out to war against it, and if in this spiritual war you are faithful, you shall not fail of victory, till every encumbrance in your minds be cast out. So heavenliness will become a quiet habitation, that in a mild spirit you may feed upon the heavenly food, and not have that ravenous earthly spirit to steal and devour it from the soul.

Beware! In the Light stand armed against the thief.

As you get an entrance into this heavenly mansion, so diligently watch, and in the Light stand armed against the thief. Keep out whatever of his would enter into your affections or desires, under what pretense soever.... With willingness of mind put all the old idols out of your affections, whatever has any place there.... Many seek to enter, but are not able, because the cursed thing is not cast out, and this can have no place in God's Kingdom....

This I say to you, which is a learned truth in this journey, that if you either retain your old lovers, or suffer anything now to enter your affections, or draw out your minds from this pure plant of righteousness and truth, you shall in no wise in that state enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; for this is the way, and must make your entrance. Therefore fight against whatever would draw you from it, and with violence break through it, and take the Kingdom.... And when you come there, you will find violent powers to keep you out, which, with the Lamb in war, must be overcome violently; for if the strong man gets possession within, he is not easily bound and cast out, for it is spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, with which you are to wrestle. Therefore a heavenly virtue which is contrary to it and of a greater power must give you your victory.

So press into the heavenly Spirit with its power, to overcome the earthly spirit with its powers. Strive earnestly in the gentle Spirit, to obtain a measure of faith and patience that is larger than the temptations and will endure to the end of it. This is a gentleness and love to cover all strife and wrath, a long suffering to famish all haste and that which seeks its own ease ... So, in the Cross you will come to put on ... Christ Jesus, the great power of God unto salvation and the great wellspring of eternal life and glory....

As you come into the feeling of these virtues, hold them fast till he comes who is the fullness. With what you have, wrestle against whatever would draw out your mind from it, for with that of him you must make war against whatever is contrary to Him. As you are faithful to abide in it,

you will feel every high thing fall before you. That which cleans the vessel of all corrupt things is your weapon. That which springs up in a contrary nature to the corrupt is your life. Seeing this as it arises, and keeping your eye constant in the faith and hope of attaining to His fullness, will make your work the work of love. It will make your obedience delightful and all your sufferings easy. The loss of your former glory will in that eye appear great gain. This is your acceptable service. That faith which works by love and which avails much with God, when followed, will overcome the world and set you free from it in all things.

With the Light mind to be led down into that life that is not of this world. Come to Him that seeks not Himself, who does not have rest in things on earth... As you come to Him you will be tested, whether you can forgo all these for Him alone, and that he may make His appearance in you....

But in all your journey take heed of the adulterous mind, for it secretly devours the precious life.... That which gets in by consent, must be got out by suffering double to the delight it brings with it, but if as an enemy you withstand it, by constant and patient resistings, it will fly and grow weaker upon every assault, and He that gives you victory will grow more in your esteem and delight.

Therefore think it not strange (so long as any of the old leaven is within, unpurged out) that the nearer you draw to God in the lowly suffering meekness, the deeper you sink into tribulation, and your sufferings increase upon the fleshly part, for that is the Son's way to perfection. The

wondrous works of the Father are learned in the deep, for by the hand of God upon you ... shall you see the old foundation of the world, the root and offspring of all wickedness, how it came to be laid, and how the Lamb was slain, and what He is. The foundation of God shall you see and feel, upon which the saints were raised up, and built in the Spirit, ... and the nearer you draw to God, the nearer will He draw to you....

Beware of conceit and haste.

As you come down to the foundation of God, watch with all fear and diligence that nothing exalt you, or lift you up in mind, conceit, or comprehension, above that foundation you are built upon; for many temptations of haste will present themselves ... to get you off the foundation of life: but if you keep lowly, steadfast, and faithful to it, by it you shall be raised out of the pit and set above the earth....

.....

You know that the earthly adulterous spirit daily hunts to devour the precious life, to keep the soul in things below, presenting daily its carnal delights and opening the paths of the destroyer with pleasures to the carnal eye....

But with you it is not so, ... you who feel the heavenly motion drawing your minds out of all earthly delights, the taste of the heavenly life overcoming the earthly in your affections, so that to the world you die daily. You feel something quickened in you that cannot feed on earthly pleasures, but hungers after righteousness and sees a beauty in holiness and thirsts daily after

the heavenly virtue. So sink down into the likeness ... of that which is in suffering and hunger and suffer with it. Join to it in all its counsel, so that with it you may be raised. For that is on the foundation of God, and coming to Him as a living stone, you will be built on the same foundation, the same Spirit being your head.

... The whole mystery of godliness will be unsealed.... Here is Heaven opened, and this is the way of grace and salvation, for the wayfaring man here on earth to walk in. If you wholly exercise your minds, you shall not err, nor shall anything be able to hinder you from receiving gifts from the Father, so long as nothing of a contrary nature stops His own from arising to Him in praises, and you with it.

Let nothing cut off your communion with God.

Let nothing cut off your communion with God in that measure you have already received, but let the breathing of your souls and your hearts be continually open towards Him, and so you shall not only receive, but become faithful improvers of what you have.... Where the conversation is in Heaven, there the earth becomes fruitful.

Give all diligence, that nothing entangle your affections here below, or stop your heavenly mind from its constant ascending, for that which would stop it is the spirit of bondage.... This spirit waits upon you continually, to ensnare the heavenly life, and to get above it in your minds, and so as a weight beset you in your way, lest that which comes from Heaven or from earth to Heaven, should have free passage through a clear vessel

to heavenly seed, free from cares, cumbrances, and earthly pleasures... . Now if you join to another, and give your strength of heart and mind to His enemy, then the work of God ceases, the way being stopped by adultery, covetousness, idolatry, wantonness, slothfulness, or whatever of that nature you join to. Your consent gives him strength to stop the way of life.... He can make headway only where he is listened to, let in, or obeyed, but being resisted, flies. Being let in, he seats himself in the heavenly way with much policy and power, and is not easily got out, nor seen to be what he is.

So when you feel your way darkened, or affections grow cold towards Heaven, then take heed with all diligence to search in the pure Light, for your enemy has got some entrance, which you will come to see by faithful and patient waiting in the Light. Take heed, through the power of the cross, to kill that life, and cast out that in which it was conceived,... for he dulls the affections, and clogs the heavenly mind, so that it cannot ascend....

Hold fast to that which you have received.

Hold fast to that which you have received of the holy One, ... and with it stand armed against whatever would enter.... With all diligence observe that which you have of His in spirit, which the adversary seeks so much to draw you forth from, ... and in this maintain your daily watch.

... So are you faithful stewards, and are accepted in what you have, and not in what you have not ...

.....
Therefore let your food be in the life of what you know, and in the power of obedience rejoice, and not in what you know but cannot live.... So let your labor and diligence be in that which presses into the heavenly being and seeks a conformity to Christ in obedience of what you believe, and hearken in love to that, not in that mind which would save your own lives, nor feed you where you are, but in love to that which separates you from self-life, and changes you into His life whom you wait for from above.

So in receiving his commands in that which loves to be like Him in life, your faith works by love, and His commands are joyous through love. That faith works into obedience, quickness, and willingness. It works out the old and works into the new, and so, through the hope of that which you love and through the obedience of faith, the entrance is made with the Life, into the Holy Kingdom. Immortal glory is put on which is seen in the light and obtained in the Life....

.....
A garden metaphor: weeds are fed by the mind.

As you mind only to feed on the plant of life, you will come to know the work of the Father in his vineyard, and who the faithful laborer is, and what must be his work, and who the slothful servant is, and what his work brings forth; and the cause why the field of the sluggard is overgrown with evil fruits, and why his vine brings not fruit to perfection. For you will find many plants besides the tree of life, all of which seek to

be fed and strengthened in the mind and affections, ... which spread and bring forth abundantly after their several kinds. All these present themselves to the eye of the mind to be fed from the mind... Without this they cannot live long, but must pine away and fall as they die in the affections, as the mind is withdrawn from such objects as they are fed with. So the work of him that is faithful is to number these to the ax, and to the fire, and not to suffer these any place in the mind, however strongly they tempt and try every way to spread root to keep life, so that, through the death of these, the vine may grow alone in the clean affections and holy mind, and the honest chaste heart, which is the good ground. There the pure plant will bring forth of itself, where it is not cumbered with that which is contrary to it. All that mind the Light may see these contrary fruits, but if the sluggard is not diligent to dig up the root as well as to condemn the fruit, they will daily grow and encumber the good ground. Those who know what they should do, but are not able to abide therein, lose their life in the midst of this wilderness, which is overgrown with wild plants.

But you, being diligent in your watch, you will see that the cause of all your troubles and confusion... is not for nothing, for you will find many plants of several kinds.... Every kind has its specific life, which lives have their specific feedings, all which you may feel in the Light, by their temptings to lead out your minds. Though they are of several motions, and live upon several objects, yet the least of them being fed by consent in your mind, will overrun the vine, and in time

bury it by growing up in your affections. Therefore all must come down, that Truth alone may rise in your affections, and the Word of Life have place in your hearts ...

Mind what you follow, do not be in haste.

In this work mind what you follow. Follow nothing rashly, but test all things with the fire, and that which will not endure the temptation and bear the cross is the adulterer who will look out every way for ease.... If a separation is made between that which God chooses in His working power, and that which He condemns, you will come to know to what to join, and from what to withdraw, that you may be workers together with Him, and not against Him....

.....
...Therefore run not with that which is in haste, but lie down in that which is gentle, lowly, and patient, that which is willing to wait the Father's time. Seek to obtain by the obedience of faith, and not in the will that would have control, for a nature there is which runs out for help, and ravens abroad to be satisfied, which God will famish. This nature will seek to lead the mind if it be followed. It will hunt about and murmur if it be not satisfied.... It must suffer hunger, and feel the Lamb's wrath and plagues upon its head whatever way it turns, till it bows and comes under, which it will not do till it be pined with famine.... In this work take heed you be not betrayed with that very subtle spirit which runs to the one hand or the other, neither into eagerness and haste, which is its first way after convincement, or, when

it gets not its end from that, into sloth and idle carelessness. Both these keep it alive in strength above the seed, but there is a straight way between these, in which the seed arises. This is a diligent, watchful, patient meekness, feeling the godly principle moving and following it in faith and obedience in all things, without haste or ends.... Be constantly diligent lest anything slip out of the mind which is freely given, either for practice or teaching. Only the diligent mind holds the true living treasure, but the slothful and disobedient are leaking vessels.

If you are wise in the Light, prove your freedom from that nature which is high, and fierce, and hasty, or any way above the gentleness.... Know that you are not servants to that nature which hastens into the greediness after worldly things, and fears and distrusts if it has not in its sight and possession what it lusts after. Being convinced of an inheritance in heaven, it would have that also in all haste but not through faith, patience, and obedience. If it may not obtain this... in its own way and time, it will be ready to faint and distrust. This nature will never strip itself of all in hopes of an inheritance it has not seen.

True liberty

Prove your freedom in all things, that you may not glory in vain but in all the liberty of sons. Do not say *All things are lawful, all things are pure, etc.* and so sit down and say you are redeemed and have a right to all. First pass through all things, one after another as the Light leads you. Then with a true measure see if you are free from

the power of any. When you have proved this throughout all things, and found your freedom, then you may say: *All things are lawful*. You will know what is expedient and what edifies yourselves and others.... This is the liberty of the sons of the new creation, born again, not in bondage. Their liberty is glorious above all created things. These are the pure to whom all things are pure, who have tested all things with that which is pure and who hold fast only that which is good and from the rest they are free.

Stand fast, do not look back.

...Therefore stand fast in that which you have proved to be liberty indeed, and by no means look back nor hanker to that which is behind, to let it overtake you again. Remember Lot's wife; the wrath of God will ever be upon that mind which looks back into old things which were judged in the Light, and led out of with the Life. Stand single in your minds to follow nothing, new nor old, but what the Holy Spirit leads into; for the work is a work you know not, nor the way do you know, except as it is learned in the obedience by which the soul is purified and cleared by purging out the old earthly leaven, which has darkened the temple of God....

Therefore give all diligence to the Spirit's motion and leadings, what it moves against, and what it leads to; for now God will make all things new; a new creation, new heavens and new earth, and a new heart and mind, and a new law, a new man to walk therein with his Maker with cheerfulness as the old bonds are broken by the

Spirit's leading, and to serve in a newness of spirit. As you mind the pure leadings of the Spirit, and willingly follow and obey, you will come to know your Creator in the days of your youth, and how He made the worlds by the word of His holiness; and how He is your Father, and in what, and how He begets you again into the heavenly delights, you who were gone out from Him... . The new creature is accepted into God, ... and is renewed by following His Spirit who created him.

This work will be darkened to your understanding if your minds come not clear out of the old and into the new.... Confusion will be in that mind which is double.... If the eye be single, the whole body is full of light, and then the faith arises to endure to the end of the world and to look to the beginning and finishing of the new work of regeneration. Though the world pass away with thunder, earthquakes, and mighty noise, if you stand single to God in this, you shall not fear nor faint. Abide in the gentle, patient and suffering spirit, and in the leadings of that which endures all things to win Christ....

TWO MEDITATIONS ON *MILK FOR BABES*

BY ANN LEWIS

Some Thoughts or Re-interpretations of “If you are faithful in this trial, you shall learn Christ and find out the wiles of Satan.”

When we land ourselves in trouble or in difficult situations we tend to redeem ourselves from them by adopting particular strategies or psychological habits. My own speciality is to distance myself from the situations or people I am not getting on with and go into stony silence mode. Another method I am familiar with is to enter into logical and rational arguments to which there is no answer. When we find such a working strategy we often go on using it because we feel justified by it, regardless of whether we have subjected it to God’s Light. James Nayler describes this as “making flesh his arm” so that we “inherit the curse” and the “earth comes over” us. Therefore we must accept none other than God and allow his Light to shine on all these aspects of ourselves.

Relying on human strategies to resolve recurring problems which beset us leads us ever further into devising more subtle and convoluted means to extricate ourselves from them. Our own deviousness (presented in the nicest possible guises, of course) can be astonishingly inventive and various. We can only applaud ourselves for such creativity! But how soon does it lead us into negativity instead of positive attitudes; into self-serving instead of God-serving; into dwelling in the shadows of human nature instead of living in the searching nature of the Light?

James Nayler says that we must stay with our constant example, the Christ figure. In my experience I see him within my human companions and friends. I am often uplifted and heartened by seeing small unexpected acts of

kindness, patience and peace in unexpected places. I am immensely touched by loving gestures towards me – a card sent, a dish of pasta given, a wink in meeting! God wants us to live within this ambience; to know that the victory over evil is won; that his loving hand will lead us through our lives and that we shall be covered with his glory. There are two tall Victorian alabaster angels which stand guard at either end of the tomb of one of the owners of a stately home near where I live. Their apricot-coloured wings cover the ends of the tomb in a graceful and constant attitude of compassion. For me they are a metaphor of the way God covers us.

Let us try to be faithful in all that life throws at us. Dwelling on our miseries only feeds into resentment and thence to seeking quick fixes and smart answers which the world offers very readily all the time. Crystals, aromatherapy, eating lentils may be helpful but they do not lead us to maturity on their own. We can find ourselves maintained by them and still blaming external things or other people when life does not go as we want it to. These things are not to be trusted. James Nayler says we have to wait patiently seeking God's purpose. How much easier it is though, to find speedy ends to wearisome uncertainties. However, this "carnal way" as he describes it, will demolish our quiet dependence upon God.

It is better to listen to the leadings of the spirit than to take our ease expecting others to make our decisions for us. We must hold to our direct experience and work at understanding it in God's Light and not be distracted by thinking that our lives are too hard and the process too long. Our freedom is in knowing that there are fulfilling alternatives. What an inheritance! However, it is my reluctant conclusion that pain, uncertainties and disappointment make up much of our lives and will do so until we can place God truly at the centre of our lives as

James Nayler did and was able to tell us, from his own bitter experience.

God's nature is to be entirely faithful whatever we are like and perhaps it is only at the end that we shall comprehend true obedience and joy.

BY STEPHANIE KOENIG

Some Reflections on *Milk For Babes*

As Evamaria points out in her introduction, there are aspects of Nayler's language and imagery that can present difficulties for the modern Quaker. As I struggled with some of these, and read and re-read this piece, I found too that there were also wonderful images and wonderful words of comfort and encouragement. Following are some of my reflections on both aspects of my experience.

I've often found myself encountering difficulty with traditional words for the transcendent – “God,” “Our Father,” “Christ” – as they so often entail associations for me having to do with teachings about, rather than experience of. Quaker faith and practice has offered me a means of responding to my yearning to “go home” spiritually; to turn toward, and experience, that which is my true source and nature. So I find that while some of Nayler's language about God is very traditional, I also feel very drawn by the language he uses that seems to bespeak his experience: “a well-spring of living waters in yourselves”; “He lives from whence all the springs do come”; “your Beloved”; “Him that dwells in the Light;” “the holy One”; “that which calls in the wandering mind”; and “let the breathing of your souls and your hearts be continually open towards Him.”

Nayler reminds us with such language that our truest desire is for the eternal One. He says, “This is what your souls groan for,” and repeatedly refers to “your Beloved.”

And he also points out our central spiritual dilemma – we are kept from what we most yearn for by distracting thoughts, conceits, and desires, and these can be terribly seductive. How familiar this all is to me! I do feel my connection to and yearning for the eternal, and yet I get immersed again and again in all this getting and achieving and thinking and planning. These activities can and do create a veil that separates me from the divine. Nayler tells us, “keep your eye to your Beloved.”

And yet, there are some points at which I find myself troubled by Nayler’s language suggesting all fleshly experience is to be shunned. Is this material world and our corporeal existence simply a source of distraction and temptation to be rejected entirely? I find myself more inclined to think of life itself as a blessing, and to think that there are many blessings in life the enjoyment of which actually bring us closer to the divine. A beautiful sunset, a moment of deep understanding between two friends, the miracle of birth, the deep joy of love between two people, the pleasure of touch – does this Divine Source create all this and our responses to this and then demand that we live utterly apart from the material world? Are our hearts and souls not attuned to and responsive to beauty and love, and are these not experienced through our senses and our bodies? And do not our responses to beauty and love in some ways bring us closer to the source of all beauty and love? Is not our compassion in the face of suffering based on our corporeal understanding of suffering, our deep knowing of how the body and heart can hurt? And is not compassion what all the great world religions ask of us? I think that our experience of life can be an invitation to respond with love, gratitude and compassion, all of which draw us closer to our spiritual foundation. It does not help me to think of life as something to be eschewed, full of sin, that keeps us from our spiritual home.

Nevertheless, life, with all its blessings, is also full of suffering. Nayler speaks of the suffering and trials we must go through in our journey toward our Beloved. While some of what he says seems to be almost an idealization of suffering (as a way of being with Christ), we cannot deny its reality – the losses, pains, disappointments and even tragedy that befall us and those whom we care about. How do we respond to such suffering? Jack Kornfeld, an American Buddhist, wrote that one of his teachers told him to find gratitude for that which was most trying to him, for that is his teacher, teaching him patience, non-attachment, and compassion. Nayler says, “Still believe that all that befalls you is but to waste that which would hinder you from being joined unto Him you so highly prize.” So as we deal with our losses and disappointments, our trials and failures, perhaps we grow in understanding that what is most meaningful here on earth cannot be found in attachment to our ever-changing material lives, but in how we experience inevitable loss. What abides in the face of loss? Where are we anchored? Can having too much comfort and security blind us to the deeper reality we all seek? Do we find a false home in material comfort, achievement, the regard of our fellow men and women? Where is our true home? Nayler admonishes us that “Whatever you own for your Redeemer out of trouble, that must be your Lord and Master, and you its servant. Therefore take heed you own none for a helper, but Him whom you look to inherit.”

And Nayler has a message of hope for us as we look to our Beloved – “The more diligently you wait upon Him in all conditions you pass through, even so the more do you receive Him.” And also, “Let nothing cut off your communion with God in that measure you have already received, but let the breathing of your souls and your hearts be continually open towards Him, and therein you shall not only receive, but become faithful improvers of what you have.” The very

moment we feel our yearning for, and then turn toward, the Divine, the Eternal One, we have begun a journey that can bring us ever closer. If we keep responding to the promptings of the Spirit, we open ourselves to receive still more, and we can continue to grow spiritually.

But as Nayler continually tells us, there are many distractions along the way, many temptations to blind us to our true nature (and these, because of the language and imagery of his time, Nayler portrays as Satan). We must continually try to distinguish between that which brings us closer to, and that which separates us from, the One whom our souls hunger for. “If a separation is made between that which God chooses in His working power and that which he condemns, you will come thereby to know what to join, and from what to withdraw, that you may be workers together with Him.” This is the essence, I believe, of discernment, and I believe this message is profoundly important to us today, living as we do in a world full of temptations, distractions, and compelling activities and demands upon us. Nayler says, “Your work is to war against whatever would keep you from coming to this foundation and cornerstone.” I don’t much like the war imagery, but there is an important truth here. We must be continually discerning about how we spend our time, where we turn our attention, what occupies our minds, our hours and days. How do we discern which of our many activities and goals we honor and pursue, and which we must lay down? The only answer, it seems to me, is to continually make the time and space to listen deeply, to let the Light inform us, to open to and follow the promptings of the Spirit. “With all diligence press into that which calls in the wandering mind, and give heed with watching and wrestling to abide in it, which as you are faithful in it, it will be enlarged, till it become a habitation for your pure mind to dwell in, and take up its rest.”

Nayler also seems to know, first-hand, how easily one can be discouraged and depleted in the spiritual journey. “So when you feel your way darkened, or affections grow cold towards Heaven, then take heed with all diligence to search in the pure Light, for your enemy has got some entrance, which you will come to see by faithful and patient waiting in the Light.” And, “... in all your journey take heed of the adulterous mind, for it secretly devours the precious life.” I think by “adulterous mind” he means a mind that would betray its own true nature, seeking gratification in things that cannot last, and distracting us from our Beloved. He says, “Hold fast to that which you have received from the Holy One, and with it stand armed against whatever would enter.” On every spiritual journey, there are not only temptations and difficulties, but also times of darkness, when our “affections grow cold toward Heaven.” In speaking of this, he helps us know something more of the spiritual journey, its dark and difficult moments, and reassures us that by holding fast to what we have received, and waiting patiently in the Light to search for what has gotten in our way, we may come out of this darkness. He assures us that “so are you faithful stewards, and are accepted in what you have, and not in what you have not....” We need only keep returning to the Light, opening to what has been given to us. We need not hasten after what we do not have (spiritually), but nurture what we have been given.

Much of Nayler’s language hearkens to a time when turning toward God meant rejecting the life of the flesh, and when physical suffering was idealized as a way of being close to Christ, and this can present obstacles for the modern Quaker. Nevertheless, as I have suggested, there is much in this piece that can guide us and give us hope; there is much that speaks to our modern sensibilities and struggles. Clearly, there are some things that do not change over the centuries – our deep yearning for communion with

and grounding in the eternal, our experience of so many tempting distractions and challenging obstacles as we attempt to respond to this yearning, and the times of darkness and discouragement in our spiritual journeys. Nayler speaks with much heart as he encourages us to return again and again to that which we have been given, to hold fast to it, to wait patiently in the Light for more guidance, and to endure, with faith and searching, the dark times we all encounter.

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