

To all rational and meek-spirited readers, who are men most fit to judge

Gerrard Winstanley

1649

Friends, I do not write this epistle to set up myself, as if there were something more in me than other men; I tell you plain, I have nothing but what I do receive from a free discovery within, therefore I write it to set forth the spirit's honour, and to cast a word of comfort into a broken and empty heart. Sometimes my heart hath been full of deadness and uncomfortableness, wading like a man in the dark and slabby¹ weather; and within a little time I have been filled with such peace, light, life and fulness, that if I had had two pair of hands, I had matter enough revealed to have kept them writing a long time; and such matter as hath been my own experience in by-past or present time, which hath filled my heart with abundance of sweet joy and rest.

Then I took the opportunity of the spirit and writ, and the power of self at such over-flowing times was so prevalent in me, that I forsook my ordinary food whole days together; and if my household-friends would persuade me to come to meat, I have been forced with that inward fulness of the power of life to rise up from the table and leave them to God, to write. Thus I have been called in from my ordinary labour, and the society of friends sometimes hath been a burden to me, and best I was when I was alone. I was so filled with that love and delight in the life within that I have sat writing whole winter days from morning till night and the cold never offended me, though when I have risen I was so stark with cold that I was forced to rise by degrees and hold by the table, till strength and heat came into my legs, forced me to rise. The joy of that sweet anointing was so precious and satisfactory within my spirit that I could truly say, *O that I had a tabernacle builded here, that I might never know or seek any other frame of spirit!*

But within some time my heart hath been shut up again, and then I have laid aside my pen, and could not for chillness sit in the cold as I did, if it had been for never so great advantage, so that my flesh was willing to be at ease.

And sometimes by reason of the great opposition I have met with in the world, because of the words I have spoke or writ, the fear and trouble within me hath said, I will never write nor speak more in these matters of my inward life; for since I began to write or speak the light that is in me, I am the more hated, therefore I will lie still'; this purpose hath continued a little time.

But then hath the power of that overflowing anointing taken hold upon me, and I have been made another man immediately, and my heart hath been opened, as if a man should open a door

¹ Slushy.

and carry a light[ed] candle into a dark room; and the power of love, joy, peace and life hath so over-powered me, that I could not forbear, but must speak and go write again. And when I obeyed, I had quiet rest; and when I neglected any opportunity, and did not empty myself either by words or writing but kept the light to myself, I was troubled afterwards for it.

And though I have set myself to study to fetch back to mind those things I neglected, it was as difficult for me to do as to carry a steeple upon my back, I was so dead and my spirit so unhandy in the business. But by such experiences I learned to wait upon the spirit, and to deliver that to the creation which he revealed in me; and I have a settled peace by that obedience.

And therefore though some have said I had done well if I had left writing when I had finished *The Saints' Paradise*: surely such men know little of the spirit's inward workings; and truly what I have writ since or before that time, I was carried forth in the work by the same power, delivering it to others as I received it, and I received it not from books nor study.

And all that I have writ concerning the matter of digging, I never read it in any book, nor received it from any mouth; though since the light was given me, I have met with divers to whom the same light of truth is revealed; but never heard any speak of it before I saw the light of it rise up within myself: and I was restless in my spirit till I had delivered all abroad that which was declared within me. And now I have peace. Thus I have given you account, where I had what I have writ. I received it not from man, but from the light of life rising up within me: therefore I shall leave my writings in all your hands; read and judge; and give the spirit of righteousness the glory, whom I strive to advance, and cast what dirt you will upon my particular flesh; and so farewell.

Decemb. 20th 1649.

Resting in peace, being one branch of mankind.

Gerrard Winstanley.

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WINSTANLEY: THE LAW OF FREEDOM AND OTHER WRITINGS, Edited with an
Introduction by Christopher Hill (1973)

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