

John Woolman's 1772

**CONVERSATIONS ON THE TRUE
HARMONY OF MANKIND
AND HOW IT MAY
BE PROMOTED**

Edited and introduced by Sterling Olmsted, 1987

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The essay published here was not included in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* edited by Phillips P. Moulton, Oxford University Press, 1971. It has been printed only three times, twice by John Comly, 1831 and 1837, and by Amelia Mott Gummere in 1922. *Conversations*, written two months before he sailed for England, is the only Woolman essay in dialog form. It is part of what has become known as "Manuscript A". In his own hand, Woolman did not provide a title for the dialogs; the title *Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it may be Promoted* may have been invented by John Comly.

I have gone back to the manuscript and compared it with the printed versions. I have used modern spelling, but kept the original wording even though some words may sound strange, or even ungrammatical to the modern reader. Woolman's capitalization has also been retained because it seems to show what Woolman thought was important. Punctuation is a compromise: I preserved Woolman's own punctuation except where it seemed confusing.

The date of the *Conversations*, 3rd month, 1772, places it among the last of Woolman's writings. Only his farewell *Epistle* and the *Last Essays*, written on shipboard or in England, and the last two chapters of his *Journal* are later. The *Conversations*, therefore, may be taken to represent Woolman's thinking near the end of his life (1720-1772).

EDITOR'S COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

The reader will soon notice that the *Conversations* are very concrete. Woolman deals with practical matters—the labor required to make enough money to buy a bushel of rye, the plight of the poor man's cow when the family runs out of food and begins eating the grain set aside for the cow, the decline of soil fertility through over-tilling.

There is also a strong sense of actuality in the *Conversations*. Woolman writes in the "Introduction" that he is reporting the substance of actual conversations, enlarging, however, on some points. The participants in the two dialogues are a "man rich in money" and a laboring man in the first dialogue, a laboring man and a "thrifty landholder" in the second. The device of reporting two conversations on the same subject makes for repetition; it also makes for variation and reinforcement from different points of view. The laboring man seems to speak Woolman's own mind, though Woolman was never in his economic situation.

Amelia Mott Gummere (1922) speculates that the rich man may have been a member of the Pemberton, Smith, or Morris families. Actual identifications are not important, but Amelia Gummere's speculations suggest the kinds of people with whom Woolman may have talked about economic matters. Israel Pemberton, for example, was a prominent Quaker and a business advisor to Woolman. His brother John Pemberton was a close friend who happened to be in England during Woolman's last illness, and who helped care for him. The Smiths and Morris were members of Woolman's home meeting. Samuel Smith was a prosperous merchant and shipbuilder; John Smith carried on trade with England, Ireland, Portugal, Madeira, and the West Indies. Thus the rich man was probably someone to whom Woolman *could* open his mind freely and frankly, someone he knew in Meeting, someone whose home he had visited. I know of no suggestions as to who the thrifty landholder may have been.

I find three things in the *Conversations* which stand out: (1) a detailed investigation of what Woolman in *A Plea for the Poor* calls "the connection of things"; (2) an example of how Woolman may have labored with others; and (3) a demonstration of his concern not only for poor people and the oppressed, but also for rich people and oppressors.

In the *Conversations*, Woolman makes the connection between such things as superfluity, high interest rates, the exploitation of the poor, the price of grain, the loss of soil fertility, and the decline of self-reliance. The poor are poor, in Woolman's view, partly at least because the rich are rich. High interest rates—for Woolman seven percent is high—set by the rich, drive the landholder to exact more from his hired laborers, and also to raise the price of grain. The increased cost of grain induces tradespeople to raise their prices, thereby adding further to the burdens of the poor. Landholders are also driven by high interest rates to misuse the land. Behind all these actions is the desire for luxury, which is tied to foreign trade, since most luxuries come from abroad

and have to be paid for with grain and other necessities. But sending these necessities abroad increases their cost at home and thus further hurts the poor, while the grain that is sent abroad often goes to fruitful places where people could raise it for themselves.

Even more valuable for our understanding of Woolman, however, is the example the *Conversations* provide of the ways in which Woolman may have talked with people. We know from *The Journal* that Woolman often engaged in weighty exercises with other people, but we have little knowledge of what he said, what they said, what he answered, and what happened then. The *Conversations* give a sense of give-and-take. We can believe that the conversations themselves—not Woolman’s enlargements at the end of each—went on much as Woolman reports them. A sharp response from the rich man leads the laborer to say, “Come now, let us patiently hear each other, and endeavor to love as brethren.” The laborer then follows this plea with a moving account of the hardships of the poor, which in turn leads to a contrasting description of the rich man’s way of life; “Now my friend, I have beheld that fullness and delicacy in which thou and thy family liveth.”

But most important perhaps is the concern which Woolman demonstrates for the rich man. We know from Woolman’s other writings that he believes that “true felicity . . . in this life and in that which is to come, is in being inwardly united to the fountain of universal love and bliss.” He also feels that if we act contrary to love and righteousness, “there will be an unpassable gulf between the soul and true felicity.” It is not surprising, therefore, that he spends great efforts in laboring with those who have the most. Woolman was surely interested in freeing the oppressed from oppression, but he was also interested in freeing the oppressors from oppressing. In the *Conversations*, Woolman points out that a person may be an oppressor without knowing it. He also offers solutions which he knows will be hard to accept: Cut interest rates on the money you lend. Shorten hours without cutting pay so that more people may be employed in useful work. Give up luxuries; reduce foreign trade. Ease the burdens of weaker workers. Set an example for your friends and neighbors.

But what does all this have to do with us, over two centuries later? It is clear that our society is more complex than that of Woolman’s day. It is not difficult, however, to translate roles and terms in the *Conversations* into our own idiom, to see the colonial world in which Woolman lived as a “developing country,” with a commercial and financial “elite” (the man rich in money,) with strong ties to the “developed” world and a hunger for luxury. Woolman’s laboring man is a “landless laborer” anywhere, anytime; his thrifty landholder a landowner, large or small, who employs and sometimes exploits laborers. The grain which is being sent abroad to pay for the luxuries of the rich, is the “cash crop,” which benefits governments and other elites. The damage to the land from too much tilling is the overcropping and overgrazing, the destruction of forests and the exploitation of resources, to the immediate benefit of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor and future generations. The sending of grain to places where people might easily raise their own is the kind of “development”

which makes people more dependent, rather than less.

But do these parallels between his times and ours mean that Woolman's approach to the persuasion of the rich is valid as a solution to problems today? Would Woolman try to use the same method with today's oppressors—with corrupt officials, with military dictators, with the architects of apartheid, with the agents of transnational corporations, with our own national policy makers? Or might he concentrate his efforts on the affluent among his friends and neighbors?

My guess is that he would try to work with a great variety of people. I am not confident, however, of his success. In his own day, Woolman confined his efforts largely to fellow Quakers. They might have been slave owners, or rich merchants and money lenders, but they presumably understood his principles and accepted many of his premises. Today, Woolman's persuasion might well have an effect on those who are beginning to feel uneasy about what they are doing, and especially those who do not yet understand how their life style relates to oppression, war, and the impairment of the environment.

But I would not feel easy, at this point, to say to the poor and the oppressed, or to their advocates, "Just do the way Woolman did." I would like to say, "Look carefully at Woolman's methods, and especially at the spirit behind them. Look at his genuine concern for the rich and oppressive. Look at the implications of his words in *A Plea for the Poor*, 'A perfect redemption from the spirit of oppression is the great work of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.'"

Woolman worked hard to free himself from complicity in slavery and oppression. He was able, therefore, to deal with rich oppressors as a friend rather than an enemy. It is important to note, however, that the reforms Woolman called for were not minor. He was interested in total and radical change—in people and in the economic arrangements of his time. He was not interested in simply rearranging the structures of dominance. He expected changed attitudes to be reflected in changed practices with regard to very specific matters—interest rates, wages, trade, employment, the management of resources, stewardship of the land, and the way people live.

Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How It May Be Promoted

INTRODUCTION

I have at sundry times felt my mind opened in true brotherly love, to converse freely and largely with some who were entrusted with plentiful estates, in regard to an application of the profits of them, consistent with pure wisdom. And of late, it hath often revived on my mind as a duty to write the substance of what then passed, and as I have attended to this concern, I have felt my mind opened to enlarge on some points then spoken to.

John Woolman
MO.3:1772

The Substance of some conversation between a laboring man and a man rich in money.

Laborer speaks thus: I observe thou livest easy as to bodily labor, and perceive thou taketh interest at seven per cent. I find Occasion amongst us laboring men, in supporting our families, to work harder at times than is agreeable to us. I am now thinking of that Christian Exhortation, Love as Brethren! and propose to thee my Neighbor, whether a way may not be opened for thee and thy family to live comfortably on a lower interest, which if once rightly attained, would I believe work in favor of us laboring people.

Rich. If thou payest no Interest wherein doth seven per cent affect thee?

Laborer. I was at work for a husbandman who had bought a plantation, and paid interest for a great part of the purchase money. As this neighbor and I were talking of the quantity of grain, equitable pay for a day's work, he told me that so much of the produce of his ground went yearly to pay the interest of the remaining purchase money, that he thought he could not afford as much rye for a day's work now, as was considered pay for a day's work twenty years ago.

Rich. Twenty years ago Interest was as high as it is now, and grain, flesh, butter, and cheese was then cheaper.

Laborer. Seven percent is higher than interest is in England, and than it is in most of the neighboring provinces. This is known to many who pay interest, who look at wealthy Interest receivers, as men having got an advantage of their brethren; and as the provisions are more and more in demand, partly by an Enlargement of towns and villages, and partly by a Sea-trade, some take hold of opportunities to raise the price of grain, flesh, butter, and the like, and apprehend that herein they are

only laboring to bring the price of their produce toward a balance with seven percent.

On a rise of grain, of flesh, and the like, I have known tradesmen meet and raise the price of their work; thus a poor laboring man who works by the day for the necessaries of life, must not only work more for a bushel of grain, but also for weaving of the Cloth, for making of his Coat, and for the Shoes which he wears.

There also ariseth discouragement hereby to tradesmen, in our Country in general; for tradesmen raising their wages on a rise of grain, the price of Cloth, of Shoes, of hats, of Scythes, and the like, are also raised.

Now if Interest were lower, grain lower, and kept more plentiful in our Country, wages of hired men might with reason be lower also. Hence encouragement would naturally arise to husbandmen, to raise more Sheep and flax, and prepare means to employ many poor people amongst us.

Sheep are pleasant company on a plantation, their looks are modest, their voice is soft and agreeable; the slowness of their run exposeth them a prey to wild beasts, and they appear to be intended by the great Creator to live under our protection, and supply us with matter for warm and useful clothing. Sheep being rightly managed tend to enrich our land; but by sending abroad great quantities of grain and flour, the fatness of our land is diminished.

I have known landholders who paid Interest for lage sums of money, and being intent on paying their debts by raising grain, have by too much tilling, so robbed the earth of its natural fatness, that the produce thereof hath grown light.

To till poor land requires near as much labor as to till that which is rich, and as the high interest of money which lieth on many husbandmen is often a means of their struggling for present profit, to the impoverishment of their lands, they then on their poor land find greater difficulty to afford poor laboreres who work for them, equitable pay for tilling the ground.

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to Support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

Rich. As there hath for some years past been a gradual rise of our Country produce, and we have not raised our Interest, if there be any complaint now, it seems as if we are the men to complain.

Laborer. My loving friend and neighbor! People, thou knowest, sometimes disagree in attempting to settle accounts (when no fraud is intended on either side) but through want of matters being clearly and fairly stated. Come now, let us patiently hear each other, and endeavor to love as brethren.

Some who pay rent for a small house, and raise up Children, all by

day's labor, are often taught by very moving instructions. Some keep a Cow, and labor hard in the Summer to provide hay and grain for her against winter; but in very cold winters hay is sometimes gone before spring, and grain is so scarce through much sending of it and flour abroad, that the grain intended for a Cow is found necessary to be eaten in the family. I have known grain and hay so scarce that I could not anywhere near get so much as my family and creatures had need of; being then sparing in feeding our Cow, she hath grown poor. In her pining condition, she hath called aloud. I knew her voice, and the sound thereof was the Cry of Hunger. I have known Snowy, Stormy weather, of long Continuance. I have seen poor creatures in distress, for want of good Shelter and plentiful feeding, when it did not appear to be in the power of their owners to do much better for them, being Straitened in answering the demands of the wealthy. I have seen Small fires in long cold Storms, and known sufferings for want of firewood. In wasting away under want, nature hath a voice that is very piercing. To these I have been a witness, and had a feeling sense of them; nor may I easily forget what I have thus learned.

Now my friend I have beheld that fullness and delicacy in which thou and thy family liveth. Those expensive articles, from beyond the Sea, which are gotten chiefly to please the desire of the eye, and to gratify the palate, which I often observe in thy family and in other rich families; these costly things are often in my remembrance, when those piercing instructions arising from hunger and want have been before me.

Our merchants, in paying for these delicacies, send a great deal of flour and grain abroad. Hence grain is more scarce and dear, which operates against poor laboring people.

I have seen in thy family that in furnishing the house, in dressing yourselves, and preparations for the Table, you might save a good deal if your minds were reconciled to that Simplicity mentioned by the Apostle, to wit, the simplicity that there is in Christ; and thus by Saving you might help poor people in several ways. You might abate of your Interest money, and that might operate in favor of the poor. Your example in a plain life might encourage other rich families in this simple way of living, who, by abating their expenses, might the easier abate the rent of their lands, and their tenants, having farms on easier terms, would have less plea for Shortening the wages of the poor in raising the price of grain than they now have.

I have felt hardships amongst poor people, and had experience of their difficulties; now my friend! were our Stations in the world to be changed, were thou and thy Children to labor a few years with your hands, through all the wants and difficulties of the poor, toward Supporting us and our families in that expensive way of life in which thou and thy family now liveth, thou would see that we might have a Suffi-

ciency with much less, and on abating our demands might make thy labor and the labor of thy children much easier, and doubtless in my case, to thee such abatement would be desirable.

I have read of a heathen King or Emperor so affected with that great Law of Equity, laid down by our Redeemer, that he caused it to be fixed on the wall of his palace. In that law, our Redeemer refers us to our own feelings: Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them. And as all men by nature are equally entitled to the equity of this law, and under the obligations of it, there appears on the point of tenderness to the poor improvement necessary to thee, my friend.

Rich. If I was to abate all those expenses thou hinteth at, I believe some poor people, as hard set to live in the world as those thou speaks of, would lose some business and be more straitened to live than they are present.

Laborer. I know of no employ in life more innocent in its nature, more healthy, and more acceptable in common to the minds of honest men, than husbandry, followed no further than while action is agreeable to the body; but husbandry, by the smallness of the number employed in it is often made a toil, and the sweetness thereof changed into hurry and weariness in doing no more than tenants commonly expect from a man as the labor of a day.

Rich. I have seen men perform a full day's labor, even in hot weather, and at Night appeared cheerful and no signs of weariness on them.

Laborer. That may often be seen in strong hearty men; but sometimes the necessities of poor laboring men induce them to labor when they are weakly; and among poor men, as amongst others, some are weak by nature, and not prepared to go through great labors, and these, in doing what is esteemed a day's work in the summer, are frequently very weary before night, even when in health; and when weakly, sometimes struggle with labor to a great degree of oppression.

Laboring to raise the necessaries of life is in itself an honest labor, and the more men employed in honest employments the better.

Many of the employments thou hinteth at have been invented to gratify the wandering desires of those who, through means of riches, had power to turn money into Channels of Vanity, which employments are often distressing to the minds of sincere hearted people, who from their childhood have been brought up in them, with intent that thereby they might get a living in the world. With these I have a brotherly sympathy, and not only desire that their faith fail not, but feel a care that Such who have plenty in the things of this life may lay their condition to heart.

I feel that it is my duty to love my heavenly Father with all my Soul and Strength. I feel that pride is opposite to Divine love, and if I put

forth my strength in any employ which I know is to support pride, I feel it hath a tendency to weaken those bands which through the infinite mercies of God, I have felt at times to bind and unite my Soul in a holy fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This I have learned through the precious operation of divine love, and ardently desire both for myself, and for all who have tasted of it, that nothing may be able to Separate us from it.

When rich men, who have the power of circulating money through channels the most pleasant to them, do not stand upright as in the sight of God, but go forth in a way contrary to pure wisdom, it tends to disorder the affairs of Society; and where they gather money through the toil of husbandmen, and circulate it by trading in Superfluities, and employing people in vanities, the Similitude used by the prophet Ezekiel appears applicable. He represents rich men as Strong cattle, who feed on the fat pasture, and then tread down the remainder; and as drinking at a pleasant stream, and then walking in it till their feet have so stirred up the mud that the thirsty weak cattle have nothing to drink but dirty water. And this parable of the prophet appears to represent, not only the bodily hardships, in outward poverty and want, of such poor people who are pressed down by the power of the wealthy, but may properly be applied to those employments about vanities in which many poor people are entangled.

Now if rich men, by living in the Simplicity of the Truth, stop the business of some who labor in gratifying the pride and vanities of people's minds, and are drinking the dirty waters;—if those at the same time abate their interest, and the rent of their lands, this opens a way for the Tenant to be more liberal with the fruits of the ground, when put in the balance against the work of poor laboring men.

An honest tenant who labors himself and knows what it is to be weary, on agreeing to pay five men full wages for doing that which is now computed a day's work for four, might ease the heavy burdens of weakly laborers, and open the way for some now employed in gratifying the vanities of people's minds, to enter upon useful employ.

Men who live on a Supply from the Interest of their money, and do little else but manage it, appear to have but a small share of the labor in carrying on the affairs of a province, and when a member of Society doth but a small share of the business thereof, it appears most agreeable to Equity that he should endeavor to live in such sort, as may be most easy to them by whose labor he is chiefly supported.

The substance of some Conversation between a thrifty Landholder, and a Laboring man.

Laboring Man speaks as follows: I observe of late years that when I buy a bushel of grain for my family, I must do more work to pay for it, than I had to do twenty years past—what is the reason of this change?

Landholder. Towns and villages have a gradual increase in these provinces, and the people now employed in husbandry bear, I believe, a less proportion to the whole inhabitants than they did then; this I take to be one reason of the change; but the main cause is that of Sending So much grain and flour abroad.

Laborer. I believe it is so, but I observe that where land is well cleared, and enriched by cattle and Sheep, a hundred bushels of rye is raised with less labor now than was necessary when the ground was to clear, and the ploughing interrupted by many stumps, and as we have plenty of grain raised in our country, it seems uneasy to me that I must now do more work for a bushel of rye than I did then.

Landholder. The price set on labor is high; but as we have now less labor in clearing land than we had then, and as young men who have no land of their own are now more numerous, it appears likely that we may have our labor done for lower wages than we had then; and as our Country is now more open, and great quantities of grain are now raised, we supply some people beyond the Seas with grain and flour, for which in return we get many things convenient from abroad.

Landholder. Of things which to me appear convenient, we through divine favor have plenty in our own land, and in so much sending abroad and fetching from far there is a great hazard, and there is a hazard of men's lives, and the good fruits of the earth brought forth through much labor are often buried in the sea. If our people who are beforehand in the world, would be content with living more on the produce of our own land, and instead of employing so many men on the Seas, would employ the greater part of them in husbandry and useful trades, and keep grain more plentifully in our Country, I believe it would be better for us in general, and we laboring people might have grain in proportion to our labor as heretofore; and in the plentiful produce of our Country, rejoice with the landholders. But while the landholders have great increase, and therewith gratify themselves and their families with expensive delicacies, and at the same time demand more labor of us for a bushel of rye, than they did when much less grain was sent abroad, this falls hard on our side, and though a poor laboring man may behold the Country in outward prosperity, yet feeling the prosperity thereof to be of such a nature, that in getting bread for his family, he must do more work for a bushel of grain than was required of him in years past, it doth not appear that he hath a proportionable share in this prosperity.

Landholder. There are many people in distant parts who depend on a supply by our grain and flour.

Laborer. I believe some trade abroad might be of advantage to us and to some with whom we trade, if that Spirit which leads into error had no part in directing this trade.

A great stop in trade may not be expected without inconvenience to some, but as the spirit of Truth prevails in our minds we are content with that only which is of real use to us. Thus the love of riches is cast out of our hearts, the desire after costly delicacies is subjected in us, and in true brotherly kindness we are moved to assist the weak members in the family under their difficulties.

Our flour is often sent abroad to fruitful places, and were the inhabitants of some of those places to apply themselves more to that of raising a living for themselves out of their own ground, and trade less abroad, I believe both we and they, under the Divine blessing might have a sufficient Supply; less of the produce of the earth be sunk in the seas, less expense in carrying abroad and fetching from far; and labor made more easy to the tillers of the ground, both here and there.

Landholder. We commonly raise more grain in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in a Year than is a supply for our Inhabitants, and by sending abroad that of which we have no present occasion, we not only get a supply of Sundry branches of merchandise from abroad, but also get gold amongst us.

Laborer. In rightly laboring for the true prosperity of a country, we do nothing at which any one of our inhabitants have just cause to Complain; but in putting forward trade beyond the right bounds grain is made scarce and dear even in a time of plenty; a poor laboring man must spend more of his strength to get a bushel of rye, than was required of him when less was sent abroad. Thus husbandry, one of the most honest, healthful employments, so agreeable and inviting to us, is made a toil, and becomes wearisome by too few being employed in it, and too much labor assigned as the work of a day.

Many branches of business are invented to please the pride and Vanity of such who wander from pure wisdom; which branches of business are often uneasy to sincere hearted tradesmen; but husbandry is an employment, in itself so necessary, and carried on in the open air, that it appears consistent with pure wisdom to have as many employed in it as the nature of the case will rightly admit of, and that those should not be obliged to work harder for a comfortable living than may be an agreeable employ.

Grain of late years is raised, not only in greater plenty than it was formerly, but also with less labor; and that poor laboring men and tradesmen shall be under the necessity to spend more of their strength for a bushel of it, than was required of them in past years, is a case that to me doth not appear harmonious in Society.

If gold is brought into our Country through means which renders the condition of the poor more difficult, it appears evident that of that gold the country had better be without.

I believe the real use of gold amongst men bears a small proportion to the labor in getting it out of the earth, and carrying it about from place to place.

It doth not appear to have much use but that of a currency; and if trade extended no further than was consistent with pure wisdom, I believe trade might be carried on without gold.

To make an axe or a hoe, Iron and steel is worth more to the husbandman than gold of an equal weight.

If a man with much gold should travel into those parts of the world where people are all strangers to that high value which is placed on it, and their endeavor to buy the conveniences of life therewith, to propose in exchange so small a piece of metal for so much of the conveniences of life, would doubtless to them be matter of admiration.

Gold, where the value fixed thereon is agreed to, appears to be attended with certain degree of power, and where men get much of this power, their hearts are many times in danger of being lifted up above their brethren, and of being estranged from that meekness and tender feeling of the state of the poor, which accompanies the faithful followers of Christ.

Our blessed Redeemer who is always able to supply our wants, even by miracles when that is consistent with infinite wisdom; he, our Gracious Shepherd, who well knows our weakness and the danger there is of our hearts being corrupted by that power which attends riches, commanded us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures here on Earth," and one of his immediate followers, warning us of the woeful state of such who continue in the breach of this command, said, "They who will be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Through the desire of money men are tempted at times to deal hardly with their poor Neighbors, and in the possession of riches there is a snare.

Through this imaginary greatness the heart is often ensnared with pride, and through plenty of gold the way is more open to gratify the vanity of the desire in delicacies and luxury; and under these gratifications, there is often a growing exaltation of mind, and imaginary superiority over such who have a small portion of the things of this life; and thus many become estranged from the tender feelings of true brotherly love and Charity.

In a time of plenty when great quantities of grain and flour are sent to distant parts, a poor man who laborers for hire to get bread for his family, must now do more labor for bushel of rye than was required for that quantity thirty years past, which Circumstance appears worthy of

the Serious consideration of such who possess fruitful plantations, or are otherwise entrusted with power, and may justly incite them to beware lest the love of money ensnare their hearts and lead them on to promote trading beyond the right bounds.

They who hold plentiful estates have power over them who have only their hands to labor, and if they misapply this power, the joints and bands of Society are disordered. Poor laboring men in raising up families find occasion to labor too hard, while other poor men would be idle for want of employ, were no employments provided which serve chiefly to gratify the pride and vanity of people's minds.

Where people love money, and their hearts are ensnared with imaginary greatness, the disease frequently spreads from one to another, and children indulged in those wants which proceed from this spirit, have often wants of the same kind in much larger degree when they grow up to be men and women, and their parents are often entangled in contriving means to supply them with estates to live answerable to those expensive customs which very early in life have taken root in their minds.

In contriving to raise estates on these motives, how often are the minds of parents bewildered, perplexed, and drawn into ways and means to get money, which increase the difficulties of poor people who maintain their families by the labor of their hands!

A man may intend to lay up wealth for his children, but may not intend to oppress; yet in this fixed intention to increase his estate, the working of his designs may cause the bread of the needy to fail; and at the same time their hardships remain unnoticed by him.

This the Inspired penman describes in the Similitude of a man falling. Now a man falling may go headlong where he had a design to go. Having a will to be rich, he may fall; he may fall into the condition of Oppressors, though he had no design to oppress. Thus it remains that the love of money is a root from whence spring many evils, and those who will be rich fall, they fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful customs, which strongly operate against the true harmony of society.

This of making grain scarce in a plentiful country for the sake of getting a little fine metal as a Currency amongst us, which doth not appear to be worth its weight in Steel for instruments relating to the common business of getting a living in the world, appears to me to work against the general convenience of poor laboring people, and is often a snare to others respecting the inward state of their minds.

The members in society appear to me like the members in a man's body, which only moves regular while the motion proceeds from the head. In fits people sometimes have convulsive motions, which though strong, are only manifestations of disorder.

While we love God with all our hearts, and love not ourselves in a love different from that which we feel towards mankind universally, so long the way remains open for that life which is the light of men, to operate in us, and lead us forward in all the concerns necessary for us. Here we may rejoice in the testimony of our conscience that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, we have had our conversation amongst men.

This is a treasure of which, through the tender mercies of God, I have in small degree had experience; and when I think of this outward body being dissolved, and look toward ages who may succeed us, this treasure of all others feels the most precious, and what I ardently desire may be possessed by generations to come.

If Gold comes not rightly into our Country, we had better be without it. The love of money is the root of evil, and while gold comes amongst us as an effect of the love of money, in the hearts of the inhabitants of this land, branches rising up from this root, like the degenerate plant of a Strange Vine will remain to trouble us, and interrupt the true harmony of Society.

The Love of Christ, which preserves the faithful in purity of heart, puts men into a motion which works harmoniously and in which their example yields clear and safe instruction: thus our Redeemer said, "Ye are the light of the world."

This is the standard which God hath commanded to be lifted up to the people, and the possibility of this standard being now lifted up by us, standeth in that of a lowly watchful attention to the leadings of him who is the Light of Life; and if we go from this standard, we go into a wilderness of confusion.

While we keep to this Standard we are content with a little, but in the love of money and outward greatness the wants of one person may require as much labor to supply them, as would supply ten whose wants extend no further than those things which our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of. And where people are entangled with that Spirit in which men receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only; in this state expense ariseth frequently on expense, and in the increase of outward substance they often find occasion for a greater increase. Thus a man on some new acquaintance with one whose living in the world is more specious than his own, may feel an inclination to rise up as high as to a level with him, and to attain this may frame new devices to increase his estate, and these devices may cause the bread of the needy to fail, though his intent was only to get riches for himself.

Now as men have a will to be rich, and in that will follow on in pursuit of devices which work against the convenient living of poor honest people, in this course they decrease as to that of being kind and tender-hearted, in seeking after the wants of the weak and helpless: and in that Spirit in which men receive honor from one another, their minds

are toward Outward power to support themselves in that which they possess.

With gold men often hire armies, and make great preparations for war. Now in raising great armies and Supporting them, much labor becomes necessary, which otherwise would not; and in the long continuation of these things, the yoke lies heavy on many poor people.

The battles of the warrior are not only with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but commonly contrived in the craft and Subtlety of man's wisdom; and if we trust in man, make flesh our arm, and are estranged from that purified state in which the mind relieth on God, we are on the way towards an increase of confusion. And this estate, even among much gold and great riches, is less settled and quiet than that of a faithful follower for the lowly Jesus, who is contented with those things which our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of.

In this state we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. Dead to the love of money. Dead to worldly honor, and to that friendship which is at enmity with him; and thus he is felt to be our Rock and our Safe habitation.

In the love of money and outward greatness, the mind is perplexed with selfish devices: how to keep! how to defend, from the crafty designs of the proud and envious! and from the desperate attempts of the oppressed!

Now in the bottom of these devices there is unquietness, for where gold or treasures are gathered, and not in that wisdom which is pure and peaceable, the mind in this state is left naked. The robe of God's righteousness is a Covering, which to them who are Sanctified in Christ Jesus, is an abundant recompense for the loss of that life, with all its treasures, which stood in the wisdom of this world. Under this robe we feel that all things work together for our good; that we have no cause to promote but the cause of pure Universal Love; and here all our cares Center in a humble trust in him who is Omnipotent.

WOOLMAN INSTITUTE is a project of Wilmington College, a Quaker college in Southwestern Ohio. Its purpose is to explore the application of John Woolman's insights, principles, and practices to the problems of the contemporary world, and to involve Wilmington students and others in this exploration. Woolman Institute offers courses as part of the college's Peace Studies program, and since 1984 has been involved in the development and operation of Woolman Acres, a small farm on the edge of the campus which seeks to apply Woolman's concerns for simple living, personal responsibility, and the environment, in this region at this time, and to relate Woolman's ideas to contemporary interests in sustainable, bio-intensive food production, energy conservation, and regeneration of the environment. Woolman Institute takes seriously Woolman's sense of the "connection of things," the interrelation of peace, justice, and the care of the earth.

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