

**MEMOIR OF JONATHAN  
HUTCHINSON:  
WITH SELECTIONS  
FROM HIS LETTERS**

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Memoir of Jonathan Hutchinson: With Selections from His Letters by Various

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IN presenting to the public the following MEMOIR and CORRESPONDENCE, it would be proper to state, that they have been selected from a volume published in London, in 1841, entitled "EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF JONATHAN HUTCHINSON, WITH SOME BRIEF NOTICES OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER." They are worthy of a serious and careful perusal, and present many instructive religious experiences, to warn and encourage Christian travellers on their pilgrimage towards an eternal inheritance.

MEMOIR  
OF  
JONATHAN HUTCHINSON.

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CHAPTER I.

JONATHAN HUTCHINSON was born at Gedney, in the county of Lincoln, England, in the year 1760. His ancestors for many generations had occupied the small estate of pasture-land which he inherited from them, and on which he followed his only temporal occupation, that of a farmer. Soon after the rise of the religious Society of Friends, his ancestors joined them in Christian fellowship, and became members.

The following allusion to the early part of his life is taken from a short manuscript of his own writing, and is all we find respecting it.

“Though thus inheriting the privileges of rural retirement and the simplicity of pastoral life,—educated too in the principles of an excellent Christian profession, yet that interesting and dangerous portion of my life, between leaving school and manhood, was strongly characterized by the sins and follies to which youth and inexperience are so peculiarly liable; whilst its succeeding stages, even the most

happy and favored of them, have, in my own view at least, been remarkable for their weakness, unworthiness, and vicissitude; so much so, that throughout the whole of my probationary course, there have been certain critical and eventful periods, wherein my sufferings of body and mind have been such as to leave me but just in possession of life and sense. Yet on this solemn retrospect, I find nothing to complain of but fallen self, acted upon by a delusive world and an unwearied spiritual adversary.

“I therefore would not ‘charge God foolishly,’ seeing that in all and through all, his kindness and forbearance towards me have been extended in a manner equally unmerited and incomprehensible to my own understanding; and like many other parts of his government, both in nature and grace, they appear to admit of no other possible solution than is to be found in this scriptural declaration — ‘The ways of the Lord are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.’

“I do not remember having been favored in my early years with the tendering visitations of Divine love, either so often or so powerfully as we find recorded of divers religious persons; but I seem rather to have been left to explore in much solitude the depth and the misery of fallen nature in its greatest bitterness; so that before I had attained the twentieth year of my age, the enemy of all good possessed a fearful ascendancy over me. But whilst in many instances he led me captive at his will, yet as in the case of poor Job, his power was limited; and he was



not permitted, as was evidently his design, to complete the destruction both of my body and soul, which, by the interposing arm of Israel's God, were mercifully preserved and marvellously delivered from the last effort of his cruel and malignant grasp.

“For after many sore and ineffectual conflicts, in which hope at length had taken its departure, I was favored with so convincing an evidence that God desireth not the death of a sinner, as that my heart was strongly inclined towards a state of subjection and obedience to Him. But though thus made willing, the performances of my apprehended duty have ever been so poor and humiliating as to give me occasion with deep feeling to respond to this language of David: ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.’ Amen and amen! saith a soul which thou hast indeed brought out of a horrible pit and taught to sing thy praise.”

In a letter to a friend he thus alludes to the nature of these conflicts:—“From early life, and before I could be said to be religious, either from education or anything else, I was deeply impressed with the entire spirituality of the Christian dispensation, and of course not very friendly to the outward rites and ceremonies with which even then I thought I could perceive its beautiful and holy simplicity had been encumbered and obscured. Rather than accept it thus abused, overlooking, as perhaps is too often the case, an object near at hand, the simple profession in which I was born, I unhappily sought refuge in

metaphysics and scepticism. But here, as might be expected, I found no rest; weary of both, namely, the contemplation of a religion attended with outward ordinances on one hand, and unbelief on the other; and still more weary of a corruption from which I was persuaded neither of these could set me free, I was at length drawn to a remembrance of the Saviour and his most precious promise, Matt. xi. 28, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' In solitude and solicitude my heart conceived and my tongue uttered at the same moment this piercing cry, 'Lord grant that a poor fugitive may enter into rest.'"

This cry appears to have been mercifully and clearly answered; but he says, "All was intelligible and spiritual; not a word of sacraments, as they are called, nor of any other ceremonial observances."

"From this memorable era in my experience, I believe I may with safety say I have never 'wilfully departed from my God,' though the manner and degree in which my feeble nature has endeavored to please and serve Him frequently covers me with humiliation, and leaves me no shadow of excuse or cause for complaint in case of permitted or inflicted suffering. May this gracious Being of his great love and mercy in Christ Jesus continue to pity and pardon hearts which are desirous to be found doing his whole will in the midst of manifold tribulations and infirmities!"

On another occasion, probably at a somewhat earlier period of his life, while engaged in his farming

employments and preparing to cut some hay for the cattle, he records being in an agony of mental distress, almost driven to distraction. It was then he says, "The first vocal prayer I ever remember to have uttered was extorted from me. The purport of it may serve to show the darkness and doubt of the heart from which it burst, like water from the rock when smitten by the hand of Moses; it was brief, being comprehended in these few emphatic words, 'If there be a God in heaven, I pray thee help me.'"

Many years afterwards, in writing to a friend who was under great exercise of mind, and who had sought his sympathy, he thus refers to this memorable incident: "The short petition, Lord! help me," which thou hast mentioned as one that has sometimes escaped thee when under deep trial, has forcibly reminded me of perhaps the first fervent prayer I ever put up—not in a temple made with hands—not in any congregation assembled for worship—but in solitude, under the magnificent canopy of the over-arching heavens, and with a retired corner of a haystack for my altar; here I cast myself in great agitation on my knees, and exclaimed, 'If there be a God in Heaven, I pray thee help me.'"

"Nor was this the only period of my life in which I have been thus pursued by him who is described as 'walking about seeking whom he may devour;' who was permitted to prove Job, to withstand Joshua, and even to tempt the dear Son of God himself; for since I have been more decidedly endeavoring to