

**A BRIEF MEMOIR CONCERNING  
ABEL THOMAS, A MINISTER  
OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST  
IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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A Brief Memoir Concerning Abel Thomas, a Minister of the Gospel of Christ in the Society of Friends by Abel Thomas

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CONCERNING

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**SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,**

**COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS.**

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**PHILADELPHIA:**  
**BENJAMIN & THOMAS KITE,**  
**NO. 20, NORTH THIRD STREET.**

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**1824.**

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CONCERNING  
**ABEL THOMAS.**

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“FOR our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” This may be fitly applied to the subject of this memoir; who, having very little knowledge of literature, and being naturally of a shy, diffident disposition, associating in his youthful days but little with those from whose experience and judgment he could have acquired such an understanding of men and things as is common, he was thereby deprived of those advantages which in more advanced life might have been really beneficial to him.

He was the son of Jacob and Catharine Thomas, who lived in Merion, Philadelphia

County; his mother dying while he was an infant, his father married again, and having a large family, his circumstances slender, and removing into a remote place, where there was no school, Abel was of course deprived of the benefit of an education sufficient to qualify him for carrying on trade and business among men, other than as a common day-labourer. When about thirteen years old he became uneasy on account of his want of school learning, and with the scanty means which he could obtain in his father's house, by diligent application in leisure hours, he attained the knowledge of letters, so as to read, and through the kind assistance of a neighbour was enabled to write so as to be understood, though very deficient in spelling.

The meeting being about ten miles distant, although he had a desire to attend it, yet through the poverty of the family, and want of suitable convenience for that purpose, it does not appear that he ever was at a place of worship until he was about fifteen, then, with his father's leave, his elder brother and himself went to the meeting-house; where, seeing a number of people sitting together in silence, the scene to him was not only novel,

but his mind not acquainted with the nature and awfulness of divine worship, and the requisite preparation of heart to come to a true knowledge of it, could not readily comprehend why it should be thus, or what should induce this quiet waiting and inward retirement to experience a qualification for the performance of this solemn duty.—After some time, an elderly Friend, under the influence of the love of the Gospel, stood up and spoke with such power and energy, as fully reached his state, opened his understanding, and gave him to see and feel in some degree, the efficacy of that Grace and Truth which came by Jesus Christ. Speaking of this meeting, he says, “it was not the words that confirmed me, but something of a flavour [savour] that attended them, which I did evidently feel in my heart, saying, this is the way, walk in it.”

Submitting to this divine visitation, he was drawn to labour fervently against the prevalence of his own corrupt will; for although he had been preserved in a moral life, or what is generally esteemed in the world an orderly regular conduct, yet now through the illumination of Divine Light, seeing that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked,



he found the necessity of daily watching against the motions and temptations to evil, that every thought and word might be brought to judgment, and the very important work of regeneration might, through the Lord's goodness, be gradually carried on, to the subduing of those dispositions and inclinations which man in his fallen state is prone to: and as he patiently, and with sincerity of soul, waited under the ministration of condemnation, he was often drawn into retirement, desiring that through the Spirit he might find grace to help in time of need, assuredly believing that without this, he was not able to make straight steps to his feet, or perform any thing that would be acceptable in the Divine sight. And in thankful commemoration of the mercy and paternal regard of his heavenly Father, manifested in drawing near to him in this the day of his many trials and besetments, he breaks forth in filial acknowledgment: "I can say  
" from all the powers of love in me, Blessing  
" and honour be given to the Father of mercies through his dear son Jesus Christ."

He continued working very hard on his father's farm, and through the weight of his spirit and his watchful circumspect walk-

ing, a reformation was wrought in the family, much harmony subsisted among them, and great nearness of affectionate sympathy towards him in his various exercises prevailed: but believing that retirement in this the infant state of his religious experience was needful, he obtained liberty of his father to put up a little cabin, where he might be more secluded from company, and here much of his time was spent, when not engaged in secular concerns. One night as he was walking alone with his mind gathered into a solemn calm, he had a gentle intimation communicated to his spiritual ear, that it would be right for him to leave his father's house, and proceed in a north-easterly direction to such place as it would be proper for him to reside in for some time. As this was an unexpected opening, it brought considerable exercise upon him, through the weight whereof, and his fervent desire to be rightly directed, he became so reduced in his health and strength that he could scarcely perform his usual daily labour. He then opened the subject to his father, mentioning his belief that he should have to leave him, to live in another part of the country; his father replied, it would be hard to part with him; and under a feeling of the influence

of true love raised in their hearts, and which had increased and tenderly united them together, they both wept.

After some time, the family on due deliberation, resigning him to pursue what he apprehended to be his duty, he informed them that from the prospect presented to him, it did not appear that it would be further than about sixty miles, though he was entirely unacquainted with the country or the people where he should settle. His brother through tender sympathy accompanying him, they went on as far as Kingwood in New Jersey, where there was a settlement of Friends, and a monthly meeting established: to this meeting a certificate of removal was granted him, dated Fourth month, 1757. Here he engaged as a labourer on a farm with a person not professing with Friends. His diligence in business, and his humble, inoffensive demeanour, greatly attached the affection of his employer to him, and in his new abode finding it still needful to keep in patience and watchfulness under his religious exercises, carefully attending the meetings of Friends, it is believed that in this place his mouth was first opened in the ministry of the gospel, and