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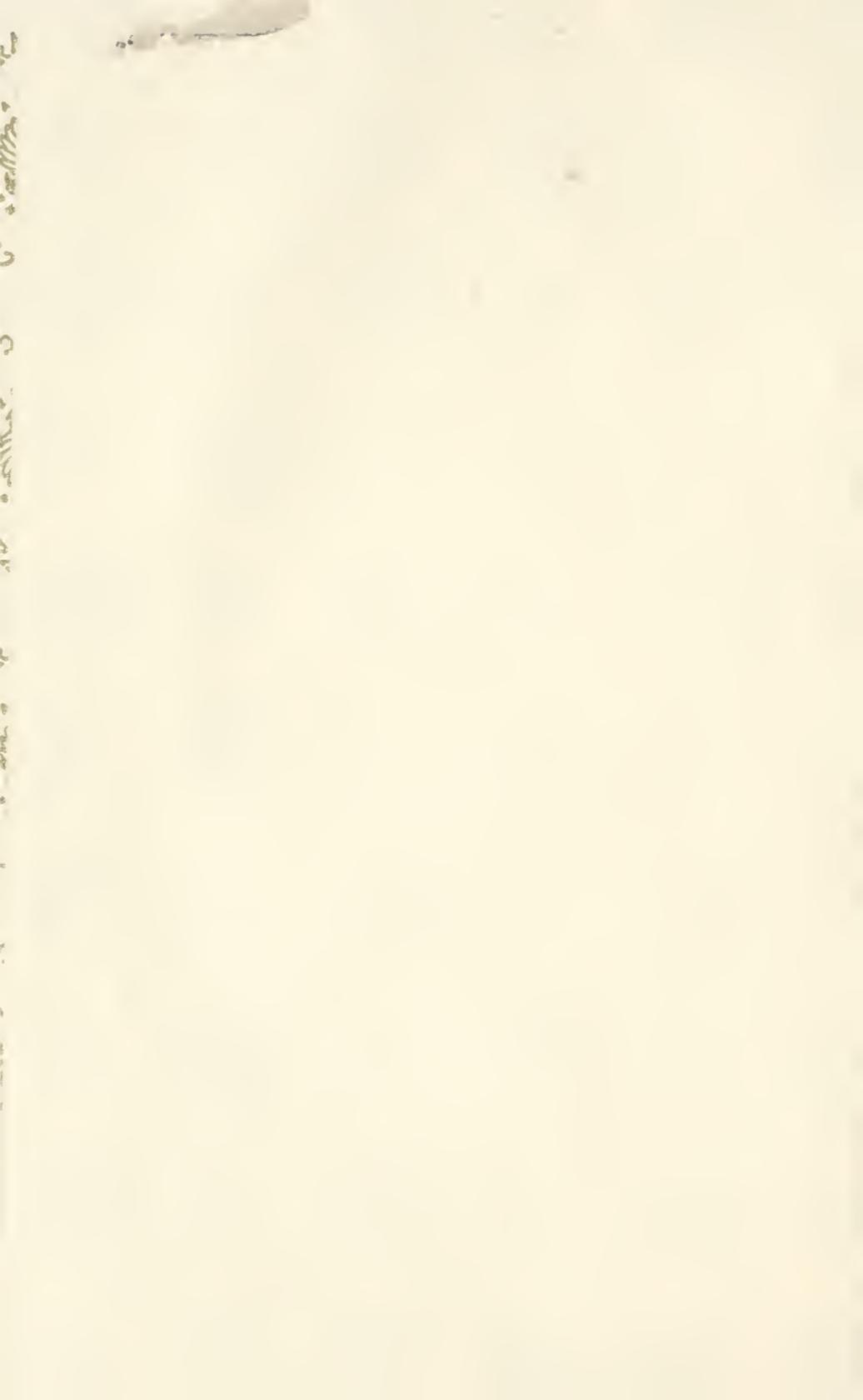


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AN ADDRESS

TO THE MEMBERS

OF THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

BY

THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS

FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, AND IMPROVING THE
CONDITION OF THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR.



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IMPRESSED with the responsibility resting on us, as individuals and members of the Society of Friends, in relation to slavery, we believe it right to offer some of our convictions regarding it to our fellow members, and ask for them a candid consideration.

The great question of universal brotherhood, is perhaps more fully before the world, than at any former period : and the noble position assumed by our predecessors, in holding up to view the rights of mankind, and their duties to each other, imposes on us a heavy responsibility. The earnest seeking after truth, that characterises the present age, which priestcraft cannot bind, nor sectarianism confine, is an acknowledged offspring of the pure principles and simple doctrines advocated by early Friends. Of all sects and persuasions, we find humble and honest hearts, "turning back from the cavil of creeds," and the worship of forms, to follow the promptings of their inward teacher, in the paths of love and self-denial, that their great Pattern has trodden before them ; and in view of the inconsistencies and gross injustice of the high professors—the Priests and the Levites of the day,—is it any wonder that these faithful have been constrain-

ed to proclaim, both by precept and example, "Brethren let no man deceive you; he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous." And, friends, let us not deceive ourselves: it is not enough for us to cry "We have Abraham for our father;" without the same humble watching and faithfulness of action that characterised our predecessors in the truth, we shall inevitably fall into the state of darkness and bigotry out of which they were called, and the noble testimonies bequeathed to us, be delivered to other, more faithful, instruments. The danger we believe to be imminent; the syren of flattery has encircled us in her arms; when those deepest in the abominations of the land praise us, it is time to be alarmed; when the open advocates of slavery vie with each other in heaping adulation upon us, should we not distrust ourselves?

Let the inquiry then come home to us individually, as Friends and as Christians, how far we have been faithful to the trust reposed in us; how far we have fulfilled the expectations of the bondman, as the representatives of a name that has filled his soul with hope.

We are aware that there is much said (and perhaps sincerely) of "the danger of acting in our own wills;" and this has been seized upon by many high professors as an excuse for passing by on the other side, and leaving their

bruised brethren groaning in their chains, till haply some poor Samaritan, less learned in the religion of men, journeys that way, to administer the oil of sympathy and the wine of hope. While we are convinced of the necessity of an humble reliance upon Divine aid, of "tarrying at Jerusalem until we receive power from on high," we feel it equally important that no selfish creaturely reasoning, prevents us from having our lamps trimmed, and our lights burning, when the cry to go forth *is heard* in our streets—and we would affectionately appeal to those who *think* they have not yet heard the call on behalf of the suffering bondman, to consider well the responsibilities incurred by throwing discouragements in the way of their brethren who feel that this duty is laid upon them. Remember the instructive reply of the blessed Jesus to his disciples, when they said to him, "Master we saw one casting out devils in thy name and we forbade him, because he followed not with us." Here was the same weakness, and in men who had just been authorised to preach the gospel, too, that we find amongst us, a disposition to limit all good to the narrow path in which they were called to walk, and the reply is equally applicable now, "Forbid him not; he that is not against us is for us."

How often, too, do we hear the dangers of

uniting with other than Friends, for the promotion of good to our fellow-creatures, magnified and dwelt upon, as if our religion was unfit to guide us in our associations with our fellow creatures, and until many have been led to believe that such a course is inconsistent with our principles, and was unknown in the earlier history of the Society;—have we not many amongst us full of earnest zeal, but who need evidence, striking as the vision to Peter, to convince them “that God is no respecter of persons,” but “that of every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him”?

We desire not to cast imputations of censure on our fellow members, but to speak only the language of invitation and conciliation; and would, therefore, affectionately invite those who have suffered their minds to be influenced by the reiteration of these views, and have applied the command given to the outward Jews, to “dwell alone,” to us now *outwardly*, to examine the consistency of such application. That every soul must dwell alone in learning its own duties, we believe to have been the experience of all Christians in all time, but an opposition to the principles that would lead to such a sectarian application, is, to us, one of the most striking features in the mission of our Holy Pattern. He hesitated not to

associate with publicans and sinners for their good ; the despised Samaritan, as well as the self-satisfied Jew, were the objects of his labor and love, and a woman of Samaria was made an effective co-worker in his cause. Whether he spoke in parables or appealed to facts, how strongly did he rebuke the spiritual pride and intolerance of his day — the parable of the poor Samaritan, of the sheep and the goats, and his seven denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees ; indeed the whole tenor of his preaching, as it is rightly examined, will be found to show that his test of discipleship was not the acknowledgment of certain forms, or the recognition of peculiar dogmas, but the fruits of a heart devoted to God, showing themselves through love to the brethren.

“ Mixing with the world ” has undoubtedly been the source of much weakness to our Society, but it is not in works of benevolence that the snare has been successfully laid. Are not “ the tables of the money changers ” even now “ polluting the temple of the Lord ” ? When was there a time in which political partizanship, lust for power, and grasping trade spread more desolation throughout the land ? It is mixing in subjects like these that dries up the fountains of sympathy, steels the heart of man to the sufferings of his fellow creatures, and lays

waste the kingdom of the Son of Righteousness in his soul.

But mingling with others for benevolent purposes is not a new thing in our Society. Almost from its first rise, we find records of mixed associations, with influential Friends for members. The settlement of this State, by William Penn and his friends, must be viewed as a benevolent enterprize, intended to secure the blessings of religious toleration and worldly comfort to the persecuted and needy; yet they not only permitted, but held out inducements to other professors to join them, and it is well for those who are alarmed at the cry of "excitement" and "noise," that is now raised against the Anti-Slavery movement, to know that the faithful amongst our earlier Friends, names that we all now love to reverence, had to pass through the same ordeal. After the blessed work of Emancipation had effected its end in our own Society, *these* were not satisfied to rest on their labors, but lent themselves earnestly to the work of inducing others to follow their example. Mixed societies were then formed, the records of which may now be consulted, showing the names of many valuable and consistent Friends, who were acting in conjunction with those not of our Society, including members and *ministers* of other de-

nominations. Let it not be supposed that there was less angry excitement amongst the selfish and interested then than now ; we have been assured by an aged and worthy Friend, (now deceased,) who had been an active member of one of these societies, that, in proportion to the population, threats of violence were as loud and frequent, and agitation ran as high, as it ever has since.

Another prominent charge is, that the Anti-Slavery movement is a scheme of priestcraft ; that its paid lecturers, editors, and book-agents are essentially hireling ministers. Why a person, who receives pecuniary compensation while informing the public of its connexion with the monstrous enormity of Slavery, and how they may rid themselves of that connexion, is any more a hireling, in the venal sense than the teacher who is paid for informing our children how they can best manage *their own* temporal interests,—or why the editor of a paper devoted to the interests of humanity is necessarily any more a hireling than the paid editor of a religious publication, we have never been able to see. Our yearly meetings have no difficulty in paying the expenses of committees to secure the rights of the Indian, and have now an agent among them, receiving a regular salary. Many facts like these might

be collected, but we believe enough have been adduced, to show the necessity of guarding against the tendency that prejudice has to assume the garb of principle.

But it is a new and mournful era in the history of our Society, when its prominent members and official bodies charge, by implication, masses of their fellow citizens with principles and motives which they clearly disprove and constantly disavow.

Those who have suffered prejudice to take root in their minds, or who, in their desire to dwell alone and avoid improper excitement, have kept themselves ignorant, not only of the motives and measures of their friends who are concerned on this subject, but of the awful importance of the subject itself, we would affectionately advise, to let no feelings of prejudice or worldly fear, no desire for ease or popularity, prevent them from seeking to know their own duties in regard to it. We do not feel it our place to point out to any a particular course of action, but, after reminding them of the nature of this important testimony, the increasing enormity of the system to which it refers, the intimate connexion it has with all others our Society has been concerned to uphold, and the bitter fruits of anguish and despair, bereaved parents, and des-

titute children, that Slavery is hourly producing, leave them to follow the teachings of His Spirit, whose command is, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

Many are too apt, when thinking of Slavery, to turn their thoughts exclusively to the South, and imagine that all their labor and all their condemnation are to be applied there. Much censure to the friends of the enslaved is based on this view. A little consideration, however, we think must convince all of its injustice and fallacy. Deeply responsible as the slaveholder is, he has many claims upon our commiseration. Besides the weaknesses and frailties common to us all, we should remember, that education and long established usage are obstacles not easily overcome; and whatever may be the convictions of individuals in regard to abstaining from the produce of slave-labor, it is obvious to us, that we are revelling in luxuries furnished by the slave's unpaid toil. Very slight reflection will be sufficient to show that if *we*, the whole North, were to wash our hands of the iniquity, in all its commercial, political, and religious relations, its duration would be short.

Permit us, in conclusion, again to exhort all to a faithful self-examination on this subject;—

to "put our souls in the soul's stead" of the sufferers. Let us remember their darkened minds, their crushed feelings, the bitter alloy that accompanies every new bond of their most sacred attachments, and then, honestly answer, each one for one, whether we have not been more sensitive in regard to a few conventional improprieties, and more indifferent to the great principles of justice and humanity, than our duties as Christian brethren demand.

And those who have felt the burthen of this testimony laid upon them, whose hearts have been touched as with a live coal from the altar, we would exhort to all faithfulness. If, at times, your hands are ready to hang down and your knees to smite together, remember, that He who put you forth is able to sustain through every discouragement, and cause you to triumph over every difficulty.

By direction, and on behalf of the Association.

JOHN D. GRISCOM,
REBECCA B. NEALL,

Clerks.

Philadelphia, 5th mo. 3d, 1843.





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