

ESSAYS  
ON THE  
HISTORY AND DOCTRINES  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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SKETCH OF THE RISE

OF THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS :

THEIR

DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE.



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## NOTE

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The contents of the following work, with the exception of the last article, have been selected from a volume entitled, "TRACTS ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY, DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS," published in London in 1851.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

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Two centuries have passed away since the first members of the Society of Friends believed themselves called upon to bear a conspicuous testimony by deed as well as word to the purity and spirituality of the Christian religion. Reverently accepting the doctrines of Christ and His apostles in their comprehensive fulness as recorded in the New Testament, they felt that they could not rest in a mere profession even of these blessed truths. Their souls longed for the possession of the substance, even reconciliation with the Father, and communion with Him by His own Spirit through the one living Saviour, Advocate, and Intercessor for us, Christ Jesus. That which they sought was not to be found in outward observances. Their spiritual necessities required spiritual refreshments. The ancient sacrifices and ceremonies under the Law, though expressly instituted by Divine authority, were given but for a season, to be fulfilled and ended by Christ. The new covenant of life and salvation was not in these. Much less could they find it in those outward rites and observances, which, having no such Divine institution, had been intruded by human authority into the professing Church, spoiling it of its ancient simplicity and beauty, and gradually usurping the place of

Christ Himself in the hearts of His professed disciples.

Without unduly anticipating the contents of the ensuing pages, the serious attention of the reader may not be improperly invited to the particular consideration of one or two points that more especially distinguished them from others of the Christian name. Notwithstanding the diversities that prevail among other denominations of professing Christians as to the mode of Divine worship, all seem, in practice, at least, to unite in this, that this solemn act consists in a course (mostly a prescribed course) of certain vocal exercises, such as prayer, singing, and preaching; and few, if any, would admit that a congregation could meet to any profit, or could long subsist, without regular exercise of this description. Again, it is almost universally assumed in practice, that in the Christian Church, with a view to prevent confusion, and to ensure a regular performance of these services, the ministry in the congregation must be confined to one or two individuals, to the exclusion of all others; that these must stately perform the allotted exercises, irrespective of the possibility of the restraint of the Holy Spirit, or the want of His renewed qualification; and that provision must be made by means of schools, or colleges, or other means of human appointment, for training and qualifying a regular succession of such ministers. And some may be ready confidently to ask how, assuming ministry to be necessary to the well-being of the Christian Church, order could be maintained, or an-

archy avoided, or an adequate supply kept up, without such provisions as have been just adverted to.

It must be confessed that these are subjects of incalculable importance; and we believe there are not a few who, with the New Testament in their hands, are ready to acknowledge that the modern system is not in conformity with the spirit or practice of primitive Christianity, who nevertheless think themselves bound to maintain it, simply from the idea of its present necessity or expediency. If the reader be one of this number, he will be prepared to admit that the principles and practice of the Society of Friends on these subjects, characterized as they are by their peculiar simplicity, and confirmed by the experience of two centuries, are at least deserving of his attentive consideration.

This people affirm that the worship of God, "who is a Spirit," is essentially spiritual. They do not consider that the communion of the invisible and spiritual soul of man with its unseen Creator is confined to outwardly sensible communications; or that outward rites or outward words are necessary to it. Hence, they feel bound in their assemblies for Divine worship reverently to wait upon the Lord in solemn stillness, desiring to be individually gathered in spirit unto Christ their Saviour, Prophet, and High Priest, and through Him to find "access by the one Spirit unto the Father;" to worship Him "in spirit and in truth," in reverent humiliation of soul, in the resignation of the will, and, if it may be, with the humble tribute of prayer and praise. But they do

not limit the operations of the Spirit to one particular mode. They believe that this spiritual worship may be with words, as well as without them, and they are far from excluding the vocal exercises of prayer or thanksgiving, provided all be offered in the fresh quickening of the Lord's Spirit.

Again, they believe that Christ instituted among his followers no such distinction as that of Clergy and Laity. They affirm that all true believers are consecrated into the class of His "royal priesthood;" and that the "manifestation of His Spirit is given to every one to profit;" but that no manifestation that is not of His Spirit can profit in His Church. Hence, while on the one hand they feel bound to deny all ministry that, being without the Spirit, is dead, barren, and lifeless, they dare not, on the other, put any check upon the full and free exercise of any ministry that is really exercised "in the ability which God giveth." In their assemblies none are restrained from exercising the gifts of the Spirit; while a care is maintained that all should act as under the government of Christ, not in their own will and time, but according to His guidance and the sufficiency that is from Him, that all things in His Church should be done "decently and in order," to His praise. Their belief that the gifts are freely bestowed by the great Head of the Church according to His will, irrespective of human limitations and degrees of order, leads them into liberty; their belief that they must be exercised in subjection to His government preserves them from anarchy.

They have no colleges for educating ministers, because they believe that the qualification for the ministry is not human learning, but a spiritual gift; they have no funds provided for their maintenance, because they believe that this gift is free, and that, according to the doctrine of Christ, being freely received it ought to be freely dispensed.

The reader who duly reflects upon these principles, which have, under the Divine blessing (though often in much weakness and infirmity), been carried into practice for two centuries, will probably be led to inquire further into the origin, principles, and practices of the Society of Friends. The following pages will, it is hoped, be some assistance to such an inquiry. It will be seen that they were originally written as separate tracts; a circumstance which will excuse the want of strict connexion and occasional repetition.



# THE RISE

OF

## THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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THE religious Society of Friends dates its rise from about the year 1647. This was, in England, a period in which many of the props, on which men had long been accustomed to lean, both in civil and religious matters, were shaken or removed. The fears, troubles, and heart-stirring thoughts connected with the domestic commotions which then prevailed in the nation, led many into a deep search as to the grounds of their opinions, and the real stability of their religious hopes; but the movements of this period must be traced to a much earlier date. To go to their source, we must at least go back to the days of the enlightened Wickliffe and the persecuted Lollards; but this would lead us beyond our present space.

The English Reformers who fled into Switzerland during the persecution in the reign of Queen Mary, and who returned from their exile on the accession of Elizabeth to the throne, were far from being con-

tent with the point to which the Queen allowed the Reformation to be carried. Many of them, however, appeared to satisfy their consciences with the hope, that they were doing more good by taking offices under her auspices, than by leaving them to be filled by those who were less attached than themselves to the Protestant cause; but others could not be persuaded thus to compromise their religious judgment, and chose rather to remain without office and profit than to conform to all the rites and ceremonies which the Queen had chosen to impose upon the nation. Uniformity in matters of religion was at this time the favourite doctrine of all parties, and was hardly less espoused by Elizabeth than it had been by her sister Mary; for very severe laws were made in the reign of Elizabeth, under which both Papists and Protestant Dissenters were cruelly persecuted, and some of them even put to death. A religious movement, deep and inward, though not very active, was going on during the subsequent reign of James the First; and it may fairly be said, that the continued denial to the people of the right of private judgment in religious matters, and the unchristian efforts which were made by his successor, Charles the First, to force conscience, contributed not a little to that convulsion of the State, in which the monarchy was for a time overthrown.

The proceedings of Archbishop Laud and his party, during the reign of this monarch, in endeavouring to assimilate the Episcopal Church of England more closely to the Church of Rome, excited a



strong feeling of revulsion in the minds of many Episcopalians, and led the way for that extraordinary ascendancy which the Scotch Presbyterians suddenly obtained in England in those days. There was among this people, at that time, much high religious profession, united with the bitterest intolerance towards all who could not accept their Directory on matters of worship and other outward services. There was, however, also to be seen much deep and practical religious conviction, and in not a very few an earnest search after truth. The strictness of their lives, and the earnestness of their preaching, doubtless recommended them to the more serious part of the nation, of various classes; but, in connexion with the power which they obtained, it is evident that they sought primarily the absolute ascendancy of their own church polity and doctrine. Though they had strongly denounced, in their own case, popish and prelatical imposition upon conscience, yet they did not scruple, in the case of others, to attempt to rule in that seat of God; and they were no less ready than their predecessors to punish those who could not bow down to their authority. Thus it was evident that presbyter and prelate alike sought to be lords over God's heritage, and that amidst the earnest discussions respecting church government and the forms of religious worship, the essential, experimental work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and the true liberty of the Gospel, were in great measure overlooked. All the chief religious parties of the day so mistook the nature of Christianity, as to en-

deavour to obtain their objects by the power of the sword; and many of the individuals who were extensively engaged in the enterprise of reformation, if sincere in the outset, became corrupted by success, and sought selfish ends under the guise of patriotism and religion.

There was, however, a large number who were constant and earnest in their desire for the establishment of truth and righteousness; and these, grieved with the versatility and hypocrisy which prevailed, were led into a deeper search into things within them and around them. Many prayers ascended to Heaven from individuals and from little communities, scattered about in various places, that they might see more clearly the path in which they ought to walk, and be strengthened to follow Christ wherever he should lead them. The deep cries of these, made in living faith, were not in vain: they came to see that they had been too much engaged in discussions about outward forms, and had too much depended upon man in the great work of religion, and for its establishment in the earth. They continued steadfast in the great doctrine, that the door of God's mercy was freely opened to sinful man, through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ alone; but their minds were awakened to see themselves and the condition of things around them in a new light. The requirements of a disciple; the denial of self; the transforming power of the Spirit; the restoration into the divine presence, that they might really become sons of God and brethren of Christ; were things which,

though they had heard them discoursed about, now took possession of their minds with the force and energy of new truths; and as they dwelt upon them, they were led to believe that there was to be known a fuller deliverance from sin, and a closer union with Christ, than they had hitherto found. They were told, indeed, that a state was not to be attained here, in which man walks before the Lord in entire allegiance to his will; and therefore without disobeying him; but they believed, that though man's knowledge is imperfect, and though from weakness he may slip or fall, yet his heart may nevertheless be so renewed by grace, as that his love shall be pure and simple, and his eye being single to the Lord, his whole mind may be enlightened to see truly and to pursue steadily the things which belong unto his peace. They felt and deeply lamented how short they were of this experience, which they believed to be the privilege of the Christian, and they sought help from many quarters; for nothing less than this experience could satisfy their inward cravings, or their thirst after the knowledge of the very truth as it is in Jesus. These seeking people found, however, but little help from those who were esteemed the most eminent religious teachers, and they came to place less and less dependence upon man, and to look to the Lord only for light and strength.

Such appears to have been, with different degrees of clearness, the state of many minds in various parts of England, when George Fox, who had himself been similarly led and deeply instructed in the

school of Christ, went forth preaching the truth, as he had found it to his own peace. Many received his message as the expression of their deepest thoughts, and as an answer to their fervent prayers. He preached Christ crucified for the sins of all men; opening the way of reconciliation to all who believe in him, and receive him into their hearts as their rightful Lord;—Christ come in the flesh, and Christ, according to his promise, come in the Spirit, to be with his disciples in their individual and collective capacity to the end of the world.

These were the fundamental doctrines which George Fox preached; and it was no way in disparagement of the doctrine of Christ having come in the flesh, that he dwelt more conspicuously upon that of Christ being come in the Spirit, seeing the latter was that which, in the professing church, Satan had been most busy in restricting and perverting. “I was glad,” says George Fox, “when the Lord God, and his Son Jesus Christ, sent me forth into the world, to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God, even that Divine Spirit which would lead them into all truth.” Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, ruling there, and subjecting everything to himself by the power of his spirit, was the experimental knowledge to which George Fox called men. This, he declared, was the state of liberty which Christ had promised to give to his followers, and which they only know who believe

in and accept that "light, spirit, and grace," which convicts of sin, and leads through deep repentance and living faith into righteousness. The Lord Jesus promised to be "with his disciples alway, even unto the end of the world." And these words, in George Fox's view, referred to his spiritual presence in the soul, as the teacher, bishop and prophet of his people; superseding all the Jewish priesthood, and excluding all those corrupt imitations of it, by which man, in various ages, had sought to exalt himself, and to evade that spiritual rule of Christ, to which the flesh and the devil ever were, and still are, so strongly opposed.

He travelled unweariedly throughout England, from place to place, calling men to repentance, and to come to God through Christ their Saviour, who had died for them, and who, by his Spirit within them, was enlightening, convicting, and seeking to convert them. There were many who heard this call with gladness of heart, and who came to sit under Christ's teaching, and to learn in all humility in his school. These, when deserted by kindred and friends, and persecuted on every hand, yet not forsaken by their gracious Lord, felt that it was "enough for the disciple to be as his Master." And indeed their sufferings were grievous and long. For when the Presbyterians had been superseded by those who had complained so heavily of church tyranny, and who had spoken so well of liberty of conscience, and of the evils of state impositions in religious matters, these were not proof against the

temptation of power: it was soon apparent that they also, but too generally, "loved the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men, Rabbi." They were ready not only to take the pulpits of the ejected ministers, but also to extort from others, who conscientiously differed from them, that forced maintenance for preaching which had been galling to many of themselves, when it was imposed by prelatical or presbyterian authority. It is due to the cause of truth as maintained by the early Friends, to remark that they upheld liberty of conscience, not only when suffering under persecution, but also when they were raised to power in the province of Pennsylvania.

Those who united with George Fox in his views of the presence of Christ in the Church, and in its individual members, and who believed in his spiritual guidance and teaching, could not conform to the customary modes of worship. They met together to worship God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth. They could not offer to him words which did not truly express their feelings. They believed that, in true worship, all acts must be performed in the abasement of self, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. When assembled, they were often strengthened and comforted together in silent waiting before the Lord; whilst, individually, they breathed their secret aspirations unto God, and realized that Christ was amongst them by his Spirit, uniting their hearts together in mutual love to Him and his great cause. And when any amongst them, under this deep feel-

ing of true worship, were constrained in spirit to speak the word of exhortation, prayer, or praise, they gratefully accepted it, as from the Lord, and as drawing to him. But preconcerted human arrangements for preaching or prayer; the setting up of one man as the sole teacher in the congregation; the establishment of a body of such ministers by the State; the imposition of their maintenance upon those who differed from them; all these were, in their view, violations of great Christian principles, interfering with Christ's authority and government in his Church, and excluding the free exercise of the various gifts bestowed by him for its edification. They admitted freely the preaching of women, as well as that of men, according to the practice of the apostolic age, when sons and daughters prophesied, and the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon "servants and handmaidens," not limiting the number in any church.

But though the early Friends maintained the right and duty of the members of a Christian Church to exercise the spiritual gifts with which they were severally endued, they held that the authority to judge of the offered services of the members rested with the assembled body of the church, under the direction of its spiritual Head. Entire individual independence in society is a contradiction in terms. In the primitive church, though there was the utmost liberty of prophesying, it is declared that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace,

as in all the churches of the saints." The members were "subject one to another in the fear of God," and this subjection, as well as the duty of caring for and watching over one another for good, were clearly recognized by the early Friends, and formed the basis of that system of discipline which was established among them, and under which, as members of the body, they enjoyed so large a measure of liberty in connexion with true order. Under this discipline the poor were cared for, the education of the youth was promoted, religious efforts were used to reclaim the wandering and delinquent members, and when Christian labour had failed, the ultimate proceeding was the declaration of the Society's disunity with the offender as one of its members. This proceeding carried with it no proscription from its religious worship or the ordinary intercourses of human kindness, and the Society was open at all times to receive the disowned person again into fellowship, on the evidence being afforded of a changed mind. As the Society declined conscientiously the usual rites in connexion with marriages, births, and deaths, the registration of these events was under the special care of the meetings for discipline. After two hundred years from its establishment, the original system of discipline is with much benefit steadily acted upon, and those principles which, at its rise, united the members of the Society in Christian fellowship, continue to be upheld by, and to distinguish, their successors in religious profession.

Although the early Friends maintained that imme-



mediate spiritual guidance was still granted to the children of God, they fully recognized the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and were ever ready to have their doctrines and practices tried by them: they accepted them indeed unequivocally, as given by inspiration of God, and loved and valued them as the genuine records of his dealings with his creature man, and as communicating to him the knowledge of that Gospel covenant by which life and immortality are brought to light; they read and quoted them freely, referred to them for the proof of the soundness of their own faith and doctrine, and recommended them strongly to the perusal of others; but they warned men against fancying themselves in a state of salvation, because of possessing a knowledge of the Scriptures, whilst remaining strangers to that true faith in Christ, through which alone they make wise unto salvation.

Believing that no typical or ceremonial rites were appointed by Christ or his Apostles, for the continual or universal observance of the church, and in connexion with the views which these Christian people entertained of the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, they abstained from the use of Water Baptism, and from what is called the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the declaration of Christ, that the time was at hand when "they that worship the Father, must worship Him in spirit and in truth," they saw the essential abolition of all ritual religious services, and the opening of that real spiritual relation and intercourse between man and his Creator,

which is the glory of the Gospel of Christ. Under the Christian dispensation there is one, and but one, baptism. "I indeed," said the forerunner of Christ, "baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" (Matt. iii. 11). This baptism of the Spirit, by which conversion of heart is known, and the repentant sinner is brought, through living faith in Christ, into his adopted family, was fully asserted by the early Quakers; as was also that spiritual communion with Christ, whether alone or in fellowship with the brethren, in which the benefits of his death, resurrection, and ascension are appreciated and appropriated, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This they believed to be the true Supper of the Lord. — the spiritual eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood.

The imposition of tithes on the people they esteemed to be a virtual recognition of the continued authority of Judaism, and a practical denial that Christ had come, had superseded the whole Judaical economy, and had placed upon the site of its departed glories the spiritual temple in which he was the great High Priest. He said to his disciples, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Those whom he sent to minister to his flock in spiritual things, were entitled to partake of the carnal things of those who received their message; but this natural claim gave no authority, they asserted, to the imposition of payment. Such an imposition, in the

view of the early Friends, was utterly opposed to the liberty and nobility of the Christian system, and was an evidence of corruption in the church which practised it, whatever name that church might bear. They called men, therefore, to come out of it; to leave hireling priests and mere lip services; and to come to Christ alone for the supply of their spiritual necessities. They believed it would be, on their part, a virtual recognition of an unchristian system, if they were to pay the ecclesiastical demands imposed upon them, esteeming it a case in which they must act upon the apostolic rule, "to obey God rather than men."

In obedience also to Christ's command, "Swear not at all," they refused all judicial as well as other oaths; and in like accordance with Christ's commands of love to enemies, and of not returning evil for evil, they believed that all war was unlawful to the Christian. They did not seek to be singular; but in the maintenance of strict truth, and the avoidance of pride and flattery, they were led into great simplicity in their dress, manners, and language.

These various testimonies brought much contumely, from the high professors as well as from the profane, upon the early Friends. They were said to be "against ministry, magistracy and ordinances;" but being brought into an entire submission to whatever, in their enlightened consciences, they believed to be the will of their Lord, they acted simply and decidedly upon their convictions of duty, and gave up all that they counted dear, in faithful allegiance

to him; and many of them went forth, as into the highways and hedges, to proclaim the truth, believing themselves called to invite others to come and enjoy the Gospel liberty which they had found. Great were their sufferings when the high professors of Oliver Cromwell's days had the rule in England; and still greater were they under the government of the second Charles, when the old Episcopalian was again instated in power, and when the prominent members of "Church and State" seemed to vie with each other, both in licentious indulgence and in cruelty. A systematic, legalized effort appears, at this period, to have been made to exterminate the Quakers! Cruel laws of Henry the Eighth and Queen Elizabeth, made originally against the Papists, were revived, especially those for the regular attendance at "church," and the taking of the oath of allegiance, and were executed with severity upon the Quakers.

The Conventicle Act, passed in the year 1664, prohibiting the meeting together of five or more persons for the exercise of religion, in other manner than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England, under pain of being committed to prison for the first offence, and transported beyond the seas for the second! An act had previously been passed against those who, "on the ground that it was contrary to the word of God," refused to take an oath before a lawful magistrate; or who should, "by printing, writing, or otherwise, go about to maintain and defend, that the taking of an oath is, in any case

whatsoever, altogether unlawful;" and this offence was in the Conventicle Act also made punishable by transportation!

With these and similar legal engines, bishops, clergy, judges, and magistrates, with the aid of a host of wicked informers, betook themselves to the work of hunting down these Christian people. At one period more than 4,200 of them were shut up in close and noisome prisons, chiefly for meeting together to worship God in such manner as they believed he required of them, and for refusing to swear, in accordance with the positive command of their Lord and Saviour, "Swear not at all." When the plague was raging in London, in 1665, the persecutors were busily engaged in committing the Quakers to infected prisons, and putting them on board vessels for transportation. Many died in prison, and out of fifty-five put on board one vessel, which was designed to transport them to the colonies, twenty-seven died of the plague, rescued from the hands of cruel men, and, as we reverently believe, taken to be with their Lord.

All the trials, however, which were permitted to attend them did not shake their faith and constancy. Though the world hated them, they were heartily united in love to God and one to another. At the hazard of their own liberty, those who were at large visited their brethren who were in prison, and ministered to them. And at a time when many of them were sick and dying from their confinement in filthy holes and dungeons, a large number of their friends

entreated, that if their afflicted brethren could not otherwise be relieved, they themselves might be allowed to take, body for body, the places of the most suffering prisoners. The government, unmoved, rejected the offer, but the love which directed it was not without its influence on the minds of the people, who could not avoid observing how largely the despised Quakers evinced the charity, as well as the zeal and constancy, of the primitive Christians.

Many persons were led by the treatment and by the conduct of the early Friends to look more inquisitively into their doctrines and manners: they remembered that, heretofore, the way of truth had been everywhere spoken against; and when they found that these objects of general reproach were industrious in their callings and exemplary in all the duties of social life, and that they were also ready to forsake houses and lands, parents and children, rather than disobey what they believed to be the law of Christ, the inquirers were often led to conclude, that these much despised people were indeed true followers of Him who, with his disciples, was not of this world, and therefore the world hated them.

It is worthy of remark, how much this kind of conviction, not founded on minute reasoning, but resting chiefly on the practical and internal evidence for the truth, whether furnished by the lives of its converts, or by the convictions of the Spirit in the hearts of those to whom it is preached, has marked the course through which Christ, the great Head of his own Church, has, in all ages, thought fit to gather

his people out of the world. In the opening of the Gospel day, though then accompanied by extraordinary miracles, there was much of this process to be observed: and in the subsequent revivals of divine truth, whether in Germany, Switzerland, or England, a large majority of the converts were drawn by a sense of Truth,—by finding a conformity of the doctrine preached, both with Scripture and with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the witness for God in their own hearts.

Many among the early converts to the Truth, who had been wise and great in this world, were made willing to become fools in the sight of men. In deep humility they sat at the foot of the cross, seeking to learn of that promised Comforter, who, the Saviour declared, should “teach” his disciples “all things,” and bring to their “remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them.” Their delight was in the law of the Lord, and they gloried in nothing save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world was crucified unto them, and they unto the world.

They found, as one of them has said, that it was the nature of true faith to produce a holy fear of offending God, a deep reverence for his precepts, and a most tender regard to the inward testimony of his Spirit. They proved that those who truly believe, receive Christ in all his offers to the soul; and that to those who thus receive him, is given power to become the sons of God, — ability to do whatsoever he requires; strength to mortify their lusts, control their affections, deny themselves, and overcome the world

in its most enticing appearances. This is the true bearing of that blessed cross of Christ, which, according to his own words, is the great and essential characteristic of his disciples. That the early Friends were among these true cross-bearing disciples, was abundantly evidenced before the world in their life and conversation; and by these, as well as by their preaching, they held out to mankind the apostolic invitation, "Come and have fellowship with us; for truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."



# DOCTRINES

OF

## THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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THE original and immediate ground of the religious fellowship of the early members of the Society of Friends, was a union of sentiment in regard to Christ's inward teaching, a doctrine which they believed to have been too much neglected by others. They were at the same time firm believers in all that is revealed in Holy Scripture respecting the fall of man, and his redemption through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; nor would they have allowed that any one held the truth who denied his coming in the flesh, or the benefit derived to man by his propitiatory sacrifice.

Our predecessors not only recognized the Bible as of Divine authority, and as the standard of their religious doctrines, but were particularly careful to adhere to Scripture language in the statement of them. They adopted no creed or confession of faith to be subscribed by their members, yet when charged with false opinions, they did not hesitate to make a full

declaration on any or all of the points of the Christian faith.

The following extracts satisfactorily prove this. Issued as they were at different periods, they exhibit the harmony which has prevailed in our religious Society, in reference to the doctrines of the Gospel, —doctrines which are designed, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the operation of a living faith, to promote the happiness of man in this life, and to prepare him for eternal bliss in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

EXTRACTS.

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WE own and believe in the only wise, omnipotent, and everlasting God, the Creator of all things in heaven and earth, and the Preserver of all that he hath made; who is God over all, blessed for ever; to whom be all honour and glory, dominion, praise, and thanksgivings, both now and for evermore!

And we own and believe in Jesus Christ, his beloved and only-begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the express image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, by whom were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all things were created by Him. And we own and believe that He was made a sacrifice for sin, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; that He was crucified for us in the flesh, without the gates of Jerusalem; and that He was buried, and rose again the third day by the power of his Father, for our justification; and that He ascended up into heaven, and now sitteth at the

right hand of God. This Jesus, who was the foundation of the holy prophets and apostles, is our foundation; and we believe that there is no other foundation to be laid but that which is laid, even Christ Jesus; who tasted death for every man, shed his blood for all men, and is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world: according as John the Baptist testified of Him, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John i. 29.

We believe that He alone is our Redeemer and Saviour, even the captain of our salvation, who saves us from sin, as well as from hell and the wrath to come, and destroys the devil and his works; He is the seed of the woman that bruises the serpent's head, to wit, Christ Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. He is (as the Scriptures of truth say of him) our wisdom and righteousness, justification and redemption; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved. He alone is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls: He is our Prophet, whom Moses long since testified of, saying, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you: and it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts iii. 22, 23. He it is that is now come in Spirit, "and hath given us an

understanding, that we may know Him that is true.' He rules in our hearts by his law of love and life, and makes us free from the law of sin and death. We have no life, but by Him; for He is the quickening Spirit, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, by whose blood we are cleansed, and our consciences sprinkled from dead works, to serve the living God. He is our Mediator, that makes peace and reconciliation between God offended and us offending; He being the new covenant of light, life, grace, and peace; the author and finisher of our faith. This Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Man, the Emanuel, God with us, we all own and believe in; He whom the high priest raged against, and said He had spoken blasphemy; whom the priests and elders of the Jews took counsel together against, and put to death; the same whom Judas betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, which the priests gave him as a reward for his treason; who also gave large money to soldiers to broach a horrible lie, namely, "That his disciples came and stole Him away by night whilst they slept." After he was risen from the dead, the history of the acts of the apostles sets forth how the chief priests and elders persecuted the disciples of this Jesus, for preaching Christ and his resurrection. This, we say, is that Lord Jesus Christ, whom we own to be our life and salvation.

Concerning the Holy Scriptures, we do believe they were given forth by the Holy Spirit of God through the holy men of God, who (as the Scripture itself declares, 2 Pet. i. 21) spake as they were

moved by the Holy Ghost. We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled (He that fulfils them is Christ); and they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17); and are able to make wise unto salvation, "through faith in Christ Jesus."

George Fox and others. Address to the Gov. of Barbadoes, 1671.

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AND we own the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as the apostles have declared. When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. iv. 4, 5. And by the grace of God, Christ tasted death for every man. Heb. ii. 9. And how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried and rose again, according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. iii. 11. And so we believe those things which God before hath showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, and he hath thus fulfilled it, and is risen from the dead, and is at the right hand of God, who is alive again, and lives for evermore, and will reward every man according to his deeds,

and is the Judge both of the quick and dead, and his sheep now hear his voice and follow him, as in the apostles' days. Acts iii. Rev. i. 18. Neither is there salvation in any other than in the name of Jesus; for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts iv. 12. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit; seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. iii. 16. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth; for there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. 1 John v. And now let none be offended, because we do not call them by those unscriptural names of Trinity and three persons, which are not Scripture words, and so do falsely say that we deny the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, which three are one that bear record in heaven, &c., which three we own with all our hearts, as the apostle John did, and as all true Christians ever did, and now do.

We believe concerning God the Father, Son, and Spirit, according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture, which we receive and embrace as the most authentic and perfect declaration of Christian faith, being indited by the Holy Spirit of God, that never errs:—First, that there is one God and Father, of whom are all things. Secondly, that there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things were made (John i. and chap. xvii.; Rom. ix.), who was glorified

with the Father before the world began, who is God over all, blessed for ever (John xiv.): that there is one Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father and the Son, and Leader and Sanctifier, and Comforter of his people. 1 John v. And we further believe, as the Holy Scriptures soundly and sufficiently express, that these three are one, even the Father, the Word, and the Spirit. And in the fulness of time, according to the promise of the Father, Christ was manifested in the flesh, and by the grace of God tasted death for every man, is risen and ascended, and sits on the right hand of God in heaven, and is the only Mediator between God and man; and that He exercises his prophetic, priestly, and kingly office now in his church, and also his offices as a Counsellor and Leader, Bishop, Shepherd, and Mediator. He (to wit), the son of God, He exercises these offices in his household of faith, whose house we are, that are believers in the light, and by faith ingrafted into Christ the Word, by whom all things were made; and so are heirs of eternal life, being elected in Him before the world began. And we do not matter if this Jewish spirit saith now of us, as it did formerly of the followers of Christ, that none but accursed people follow him, that knew not the law; and if you say as Nathaniel said (John i. 46), "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" we say with Philip, "Come and see."

*From Worcester Prison.*

George Fox to such as say the Quakers are no Christians.  
1673.



*Question.* WHAT is your belief concerning the blessed Trinity, as our term is?

*Answer.* Our belief is, that in the unity of the Godhead there is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being those three Divine Witnesses that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one, according to Holy Scripture testimony.

*Quest.* Do you believe the Divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, or that Jesus Christ is truly God and man?

*Answer.* Yes; we verily believe that Jesus Christ is truly God and man, according as Holy Scripture testifies of Him, God over all, blessed for ever, the true God and Eternal Life, the one Mediator between God and men, even the Man Christ Jesus.

*Quest.* Do you believe and expect salvation and justification, by the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ, or by your own righteousness or works?

*Answer.* By Jesus Christ, his righteousness, merits, and works, and not by our own. God is not indebted to us for our deservings, but we to Him for his free grace, in Christ Jesus, whereby we are saved through faith in Him (not of ourselves), and by his grace enabled truly and acceptably to serve and follow Him as he requires; He is our all in all, who worketh all in us that is well pleasing to God.

*Quest.* Do you believe remission of sin, and re-

demption through the sufferings, death, and blood of Christ?

*Ansiv.* Yes; through faith in Him, as he suffered and died for all men, gave himself a ransom for all; and his blood being shed for the remission of sins, so all they who sincerely believe and obey Him, receive the benefits and blessed effects of his suffering and dying for them; they by faith in his name receive and partake of that eternal redemption, which He hath obtained for us, who gave Himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; and if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John i. 7.

*Quest.* Do you believe and own the Divine offices of Jesus Christ in his church?

*Ansiv.* Yes, verily, we sincerely believe and own Christ, not only as He is the light of the world, enlightening every man coming into it; but also that He is given for a Leader, and for a Commander; and that He is both King, Priest, and Prophet to and over his church and people. He is the Minister of the sanctuary, which the Lord pitched, and not man; and we are to hear Him in all things.

*Quest.* Do you believe and own the Holy Scriptures contained in the books of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration, and to contain all matters of doctrine and testimony, &c., necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation and peace with God?

*Ansiv.* Yes, we do, and by the assistance of the grace and good Spirit of God, which gives the true understanding of the mind of God, and meaning of Holy Scripture, we always desire to live in the faith, knowledge, and practice of them in all things appertaining to life and godliness. Holy Scripture being given by Divine inspiration, is profitable for doctrine, correction, and instruction, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, able to make the man of God wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus.

*Quest.* Do you believe the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment, and the immortality of the soul?

*Ansiv.* We sincerely believe and confess the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and of eternal judgment according to Holy Scripture. Heb. vi. and ii.

That God will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness by his Son Jesus Christ, in the day appointed, even in the great day of judgment, and that harvest which is the end of the world.

That the soul of man, though created, is immortal, and never dies: even as these doctrines are more fully testified in Holy Scripture, by Jesus Christ and his holy apostles.

*First.* For the doctrine of the Resurrection see Matt. xiii. 43, and chap. xxii. 30, 31.—Mark xii. 25.—Luke xx. 36.—John v. 29.—1st Cor. chap. xv. 19, 35, 36, 37 verses, to the 53d verse.—Phil. iii. 21.

— Colos. iii. 4. — 1st John iii. 2. — 1st Thes. iv. 16.  
— Rev. xx. 12, 13, 14, 15.

*Second.* Of Eternal Judgment see Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 41, 42, chap. x. 15, and xi. 24, and xxv. 30, 31, 41.—Mark viii. 38.—Luke ix. 26.—Acts xvii. 31.—John v. 22, 27.—Acts x. 42.—2d Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.—2d Tim. iv. 1. — 1st Peter iv. 5. — 2d Peter ii. 9. — Jude 6.

*Third.* For the Immortality of the Soul see Gen. i. 27, and ii. 7.—1st Kings xvii. 21.—Matt. xvi. 26. Mark viii. 36, 37.—Eccles. iii. 21, and xii. 7.—Luke xvi. 22, 23.—2d Cor. v. 1, 2.

“The Christianity of the people commonly called Quakers, asserted.” 1689.

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WE sincerely profess faith in God by his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, as being our light and life, our only way to the Father, and also our only Mediator and Advocate with the Father.

That God created all things, He made the worlds, by his Son Jesus Christ, He being that powerful and living Word of God, by whom all things were made; and that the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are one, in Divine being inseparable; one true, living, and eternal God, blessed for ever.

Yet that this Word, or Son of God, in the fulness of time, took flesh, became perfect man according to the flesh, descended and came of the seed of Abraham and David; but was miraculously conceived by

the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; and also, further, declared powerfully to be the Son of God, according to the spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection from the dead.

That in the Word (or Son of God) was life, and the same life was the light of men; and that He was that true light, which enlightens every man coming into the world; and therefore that men are to believe in the light, that they may become the children of the light; hereby we believe in Christ the Son of God, as He is the light and life within us; and wherein we must needs have sincere respect and honour to (and belief in) Christ, as in his own unapproachable and incomprehensible glory and fullness; as He is the fountain of life and light, and giver thereof unto us; Christ, as in himself, and as in us, being not divided. And that as man, Christ died for our sins, rose again, and was received up into glory in the heavens; He having, in his dying for all, been that one great universal offering and sacrifice for peace, atonement, and reconciliation between God and man; and he is the propitiation not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. We were reconciled by his death, but saved by his life.

That Jesus Christ, who sitteth at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, yet He is our King, High Priest, and Prophet; in his church, a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He is Intercessor and Advocate with the Father in heaven,

and there appearing in the presence of God for us, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, sufferings, and sorrows. And also by his Spirit in our hearts, He maketh intercession according to the will of God, crying, *Abba, Father.*

That the Gospel of the grace of God should be preached in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being one in power, wisdom, and goodness, and indivisible (or not to be divided) in the great work of man's salvation.

We sincerely confess (and believe in) Jesus Christ, both as He is true God, and perfect man, and that He is the author of our living faith in the power and goodness of God, as manifested in his Son Jesus Christ, and by his own blessed Spirit (or Divine unction) revealed in us, whereby we inwardly feel and taste of his goodness, life, and virtue; so as our souls live and prosper by and in Him: and the inward sense of this Divine power of Christ, and faith in the same, and the inward experience, are absolutely necessary to make a true, sincere, and perfect Christian in spirit and life.

That Divine honour and worship is due to the Son of God; and that He is, in true faith, to be prayed unto, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ called upon (as the primitive Christians did), because of the glorious union or oneness of the Father and the Son, and that we cannot acceptably offer up prayers and praises to God, nor receive a gracious answer or blessing from God, but in and through his dear Son Christ.

That Christ's body that was crucified was not the Godhead, yet by the power of God was raised from the dead; and that the same Christ that was therein crucified, ascended into heaven and glory, is not questioned by us. His flesh saw no corruption, it did not corrupt, but yet, doubtless, his body was changed into a more glorious and heavenly condition than it was in when subject to divers sufferings on earth; but how and what manner of change it met withal, after it was raised from the dead, so as to become such a glorious body (as it is declared to be), is too wonderful for mortals to conceive, apprehend, or pry into (and more meet for angels to see); the Scripture is silent therein, as to the manner thereof, and we are not curious to inquire or dispute it; nor do we esteem it necessary to make ourselves wise above what is written, as to the manner or condition of Christ's glorious body, as in heaven; no more than to inquire how Christ appeared in divers manners or forms; or how He came in among his disciples, the doors being shut: or how He vanished out of their sight, after He was risen. However, we have cause to believe his body, as in heaven, is changed into a most glorious condition, far transcending what it was in on earth; otherwise how should our low body be changed, so as to be made like unto his glorious body? — for when He was on earth and attended with sufferings, He was said to be like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted; which may not be said of Him as now in a state of glory, as He

prayed for; otherwise where would be the change both in Him and in us?

Concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the great day of judgment yet to come, beyond the grave, or after death, and Christ's coming without us, to judge the quick and the dead (as divers questions are put in such terms), what the Holy Scriptures plainly declare and testify in these matters, we have been always ready to embrace.

I. For the doctrine of the resurrection: if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 1 Cor. xv. 19. We sincerely believe not only a resurrection in Christ from the fallen sinful state here, but a rising and ascending into glory with him hereafter, that when he at last appears, we may appear with Him in glory. Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2.

But that all the wicked, who live in rebellion against the light of grace, and die finally impenitent, shall come forth to the resurrection of condemnation.

And that the soul or spirit of every man and woman shall be reserved in its own distinct and proper being, and every seed (yea every soul) shall have its proper body, as God is pleased to give it. 1 Cor. xv. A natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised; that being first which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. And though it is said, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, the change shall be such as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.



1 Cor. xv. We shall be raised out of all corruption and corruptibility, out of all mortality; and the children of God and of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels of God in heaven. And as the celestial bodies do far excel terrestrial, so we expect our spiritual bodies in the resurrection shall far excel what our bodies now are. Howbeit we esteem it very unnecessary to dispute or question how the dead are raised, or with what body they come; but rather submit that to the wisdom and pleasure of Almighty God.

2. For the doctrine of eternal judgment: God hath committed all judgment unto his Son Jesus Christ; and he is Judge both of quick and dead, and of the states and ends of all mankind. John v. 22, 27. — Acts x. 42.—2 Tim iv. 1.—1 Pet. iv. 5.

That there shall be hereafter a great harvest, which is the end of the world, a great day of judgment, and the judgment of that great day, the Holy Scripture is clear. Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 41, x. 15, and xi. 24. — Jude 6. “When the Son of Man cometh in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations,” &c. Matt xxv. 31, 32, to the end, compared with chap. xxii. 21. — Mark viii. 38.—Luke ix. 26, and 1 Cor. xv. 52.—2 Thess. i. 7, 8, to the end, and 1 Thess. iv. 16. — Rev. xx. 13, 14, 15.

WE feel ourselves called upon, at this time, to avow our belief in the inspiration and Divine authority of the Old and New Testament.

We further believe, that the promise made after the transgression of our first parents, in the consequence of whose fall all the posterity of Adam are involved, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent; and the declaration unto Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," had a direct reference to the coming in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him, also, did the prophet Isaiah bear testimony, when he declared, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." And again, the same prophet spoke of Him when He said "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with his stripes we are healed." The same blessed Redeemer is emphatically denominated by the prophet Jeremiah, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

At that period, and in that miraculous manner

which God in his perfect wisdom saw fit, the promised Messiah appeared personally upon earth, when "He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Having finished the work which was given Him to do, He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God. He tasted death for every man. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." He passed into the heavens: and being the brightness of the glory of God, "and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

It is by the Lord Jesus Christ that the world will be judged in righteousness. He is the mediator of the new covenant; "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and to Him did the evangelist bear testimony when he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The

same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." "He was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Our blessed Lord himself spoke of his perpetual dominion and power in his church, when He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life:" and, when describing the spiritual food which He bestoweth on the true believers, He declared, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He spoke also of his saving grace, bestowed on those who come in faith unto Him, when He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Our religious Society, from its earliest establishment to the present day, has received these most important doctrines of Holy Scripture in their plain and obvious acceptation: and it is the earnest desire of this Meeting, that all who profess our name, may so live, and so walk before God, as they may know these sacred truths to be blessed to them individually. We desire that, as the mere profession of sound Christian doctrine will not avail to the salvation of the soul, all may attain to a living efficacious faith, which, through the power of the Holy Ghost, bringeth forth

fruit unto holiness; the end whereof is everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Minute of London Yearly Meeting, 1829.

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DEAR FRIENDS,—We are again made sensible that we cannot meditate on a subject more fraught with instruction and comfort, than the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and the many blessings which through Him have been conferred on the human race,—the coming of Him, who, being born of a virgin, "was made in the likeness of men:" "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, He received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. He "sitteth on the right hand of God," making intercession for us. He "is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and unto Him we must look as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father. He emphatically describes himself as "the good Shepherd." He is our Lawgiver; and solemn indeed is the declaration, that we must all appear before his

judgment-seat, to receive our reward, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.

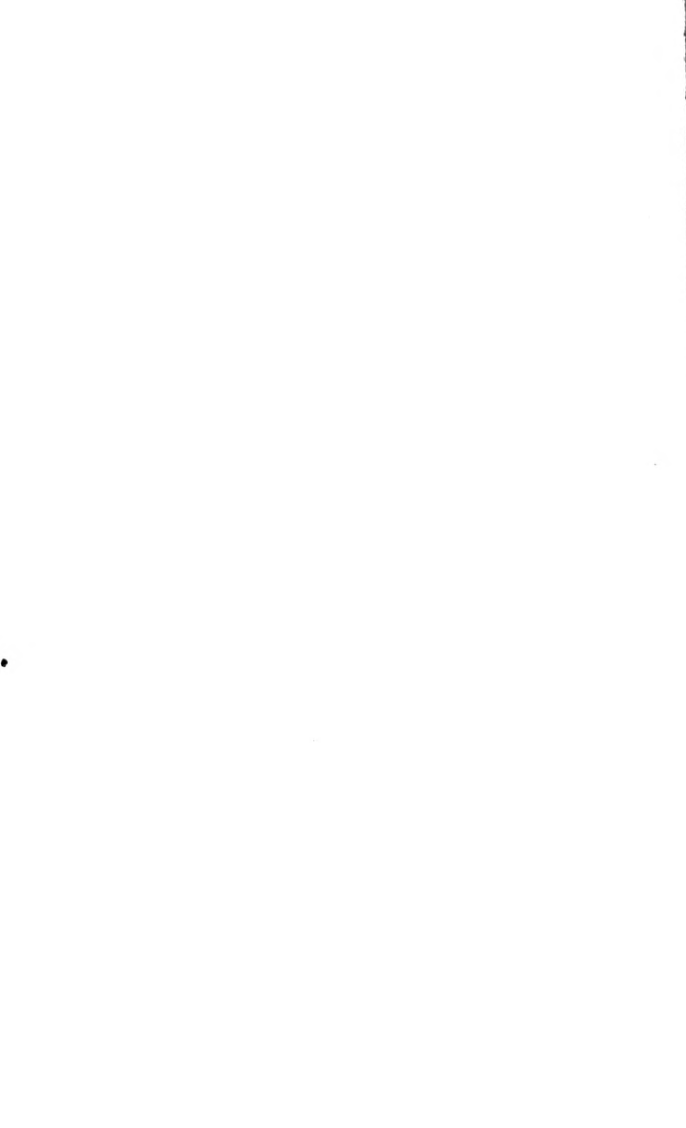
We feel that it is not a light matter thus to advert again to the various offices of the Son and sent of the Father; and we beseech all whom we are addressing, to contemplate these solemn truths with due reverence; yet frequently to meditate thereon, seeking for the assistance of the Grace of God to direct their understandings aright. As this is done with humble and believing hearts, the conviction will increase, and ultimately become settled, that it is a great mercy to know individually that we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

But, blessed be God, He has not only provided the means of reconciliation unto himself, through the sacrifice of Christ; He hath also, through the same compassionate Saviour, granted unto us the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this the patriarchs, and the holy men of old who lived under the law, walked acceptably before God. Its more plenteous effusion, and its powerful and life-giving effects, were distinctly foretold by the ancient prophets. Christ himself declared that it was expedient that He should go away, that He might send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who should guide into all truth: in allusion to whose coming He also said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." To be guided by his Spirit is the practical application of the Christian

religion. It is the light of Christ which enlightens the darkness of the heart of man: and by following this light, we are enabled to enjoy and maintain communion with Him. The children of God are led by the Spirit of God; and this is the appointed means of bringing us into that state of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is not a doctrine of mysticism, but one of practical piety. The great office of the Holy Spirit we firmly believe to be, to convince of sin, to bring the soul to a state of deep and sincere repentance, and to effect the work of sanctification. A holy and constant watchfulness is required, to preserve the mind alive to the guidance of this Divine Teacher; who, if diligently sought after and waited for, will be found to be a swift witness for God in the soul, producing that tenderness of spirit, and that quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord, which are essential to our growth in grace.

It is through Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, that we obtain pardon for sin; and it is through the power of his Spirit working mightily in us, that we come eventually to experience freedom from sin.

Epistle of London Yearly Meeting, 1830.





THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE  
OF  
THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
AS HELD BY THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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THE great doctrine of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as held by the religious Society of Friends, has often been misunderstood, and it has been felt to be desirable to attempt briefly to state the views of the Society upon this doctrine. Before, however, proceeding to do this, it may be right to premise a few particulars relative to some other fundamental points.

1. They have always maintained that the Holy Scriptures were given by inspiration of God; and, believing them to convey to man a declaration of the dealings of God with his people in past ages—of his statutes, judgments, and mercy, and, above all, as containing the message of the covenant of grace and peace through Jesus Christ—they have always taught that these writings are to be reverently received, diligently read, and their commands faithfully obeyed.

2. In full accordance with these writings they have ever believed, that there is one God and Father of

all, of whom are all things; that there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things were made, who was glorified with the Father, before the world was, who is God over all, blessed for ever; and that there is one Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father and the Son, the leader, sanctifier, and comforter of his people; and that these three are one God. And, though shunning scholastic terms and distinctions, or the attempt to be wise in the deep things of God beyond what he has plainly revealed, they have ever held, without any mystification, the real manhood as well as the deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: that the Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh and dwelt amongst us; that He was the Messiah of whom the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, so largely speaks, and whose offices in the church were pre-figured in various types under the Mosaic covenant.

3. They believe that man, as he stands in the fall, is separated, alienated in his nature from God; that we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and are therefore exposed to Divine wrath; and that it is solely through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ that we are again brought into reconciliation with Him; receiving remission of our sins through the one propitiatory offering of the Lamb of God, and sanctification of heart through the influences of the Holy Spirit. They also believe that there shall be a great day of final account, in which all men shall be judged by Jesus Christ, when "all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come

forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." John v. 21, 29.

4. They have from their origin declared that they believed in no natural principle or power in man to discover Divine truth, so as to enable him to turn effectually to God; but they have not hesitated to declare their experimental conviction, that by the immediate power of his Spirit man is convinced of sin, led to deep repentance for sin, to trust alone to the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, and to experience the purification of his heart by the baptism of the Spirit.

It is in referenee to this great practical work that they have urged so earnestly the doctrine of spiritual influence; that they have called upon men to consider whether they did not know the convictions for sin in their own hearts, and besought them to attend to them as the monitions of the Holy Spirit calling them to repentance, and to come unto Christ, that they might be made partakers of the blessings of his covenant, and know through Him true union and peace with God.

They esteem it no derogation from the character of Holy Scripture, but that it is in the strictest accordance with its scope and letter, to maintain that some measure of the light of the Spirit of God has been immediately granted to man ever since his fall, for the purpose of his restoration; that it is the spring and principle of all true knowledge and holiness; and that a larger measure of this grace, a fuller com-

munication between God and his people, is the peculiar feature and privilege of the Christian covenant.

Neither do they imagine that they withdraw one iota from the character of our blessed Lord, as having been the sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, and as still ever living at the right hand of the Father, as our high priest and intercessor, when they assert, as they believe on the full authority of Holy Scripture, that, as the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9), Christ has been spiritually present with mankind in every age; that with Him in an especial manner the righteous patriarchs walked; that He followed and instructed the children of Israel; and that He is still present with the objects of his redeeming love, calling them by his grace, and, when converted to Him, dwelling with them as their Bishop, Teacher, and King.

When the apostle John declares, that Christ "was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," we apprehend that he speaks not only with reference to that light which shone forth in himself when personally on earth, but also of his enlightening grace bestowed in measure upon all men as the objects of his redeeming love in every age.

When our Lord, after his ascension, in the revelation which he made to his servant John, declared, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. iii. 29), we apprehend that He spoke of those gracious visitations which, by his Spirit, He makes to

the souls of men, in their unregenerate state, to call them to repentance; and also of that union with Him which takes place in, and is the unspeakable privilege of, the renewed soul. This privilege is spoken of on another occasion by our Lord, where He says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23); and again to his disciples, shortly before his ascension, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii. 20. This spiritual intercourse the Society of Friends do believe to be sensible and immediate, both as it regards the first enlightenment of the soul, its spiritual discipline, and its fuller and more constant realization of the Divine presence. And when our Saviour said, for the encouragement of his disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," (Matt. xviii. 20), we believe He spoke of his immediate spiritual presence in the midst of his church, that is, not of a mere outward association of professors, but of the few or the many living spiritual disciples, in every place, under every name, and in every age.

In accordance with these declarations of our Lord are numerous passages in the epistolary writings of the New Testament. When the apostle Paul says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9), and, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5), and when

he says, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of (as regards) sin: but the Spirit is life because of (as regards) righteousness; but if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 10, 11), and when, in writing to the Colossian believers, he uses these words, "Christ in you the hope of glory," we apprehend that he speaks of the presence of Christ by his Spirit, granted for the purpose of drawing the soul to God, and keeping it in true union with Him. We do not confound together the striving and convicting reproofs of the Holy Spirit in the soul, with that which may more especially be called his indwelling presence; but we conceive that we have apostolic authority for exhorting our young persons and others to mind the convictions of the Spirit of Christ in them; and, upon the authority of the preceding as well as of various other passages of Holy Scripture, we apprehend that we are justified in holding, in the manner we do, the doctrine of the continued presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with his people, and in speaking, as we do, of the spiritual appropriation of all the benefits of his coming, death, resurrection, and ascension, and of the participation in the soul, by living faith, of his body and blood.

It was this spiritual appropriation, this inward knowledge of Christ in all his gracious offices,—not in opposition to the outward knowledge, but certainly in opposition to the *resting* in the outward know-

ledge,—which the early Friends pressed so earnestly. Strongly and frequently did they assert, that their reference to the spiritual presence of Christ in the heart was not subversive of a simple unsophisticated belief in all that is revealed in the Old and New Testament, relative to the character and offices of our blessed Saviour. It was indeed, to Him, not in part, but in whole, that they called men; and, whilst insisting on the actual necessity of a change of heart for acceptance with God, they undoubtedly believed that it was only through his merey in Christ as the Redeemer of men, by the offering of his body on the cross, that they received the remission of their sins; and that it was alone to the power of that Holy Spirit which He had purchased for them by his blood, that they attributed their ability to do any good work. Christ being thus the author and finisher of their faith, and their only hope of eternal life.

We apprehend, that whatever were the spiritual privileges possessed by the Jew, or symbolized in the economy of the Mosaic law, they are in the full possession of the Christian church. The sacrifices under the law set forth that one propitiation, which, being applied by living faith to the burthened conscience, gives the remission of sins; and the Divine presence within the innermost veil (from which the high priest received the special commands for the government of the people), is now, we reverently believe, in the midst of his church, ready to direct and guide it by his secret counsels, and to govern in the hearts of those who truly wait on Him.

The prophecy of Jeremiah in regard to the new covenant which was to supersede that of the law, appears to us strongly to support our views of the privileges of the Gospel day. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Heb. viii. 10, 11.

When our blessed Lord said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," (John vii. 36), the apostle who records the words says, "but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive," (John vii. 39); signifying, we apprehend, that the supply of their spiritual wants should be always at hand, and that the benefits of this supply should be diffused around them. When our Lord declared that it was expedient for his disciples that He should go away, for that if He went not away the Comforter would not come unto them, and when He spoke of the offices of that Comforter, we believe that He spoke of privileges which were designed for all, according to their respective needs, who should believe upon his name to the end of time.

We acknowledge that we do materially differ from those who assert that several of the Divine promises



which we have just referred to, belong only to the apostles, and that we derive the benefit of them *only* through their communication; and we think that the stream of apostolic testimony is in our favour, to the extent in which we maintain the doctrine of immediate revelation. When the apostle declares "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," (1 Cor. xii. 3), when he declares that the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," (Rom. viii. 16), we apprehend that he sets forth the need of immediate spiritual teaching, for the saving knowledge of Christ, and for becoming sons of God.

And when he says "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," (Gal. v. 17), and when he exhorts, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," (Gal. v. 16), believing that these lusts are still those bonds and barriers which keep us from the peaceful knowledge of God, and that the strivings of the Spirit are to be known, as well as the strivings of the flesh, Friends think they have apostolical authority for their so frequently urging the seeking of the Spirit, the minding of the Spirit, and the walking in the Spirit, that we may be kept from the evils of the world, and be made subject to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And in accordance, as they apprehend, with the scope of the preceding passages, and of the New Testament dispensation, and whilst fully accepting the authority of the whole revealed will of God, they have spoken of the spiritual law as constituting *the*

*law* and *the liberty* of the true Christian : and, as the natural law in us may fairly be called a *principle*, being the very element from which evil action springs, so have we spoken of the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, as a *Divine principle* in man, but not of man, which is the very element of all true holiness, and which, if allowed free course, would prove itself to be like that "grain of mustard seed," spoken of in our Lord's parable, "which a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew and waxed a great tree."

When the apostle declares that the things of God are only known by the Spirit of God, and (addressing the Corinthians) says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God,"—"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," (1 Cor. ii. 12, 14), we think that he speaks of those immediate perceptions which the spiritually-minded man alone has of Divine things, even of those which are externally revealed.

When the apostle John, writing to the church at large, and speaking of those who seduced them, says, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," (1 John ii. 27); and where the apostle Paul writes so particularly re-

specting spiritual gifts to the church at Corinth, we think it is clearly maintained that immediate spiritual gifts were not at that time confined to the apostles: and we can find no scriptural authority which warrants us in denying that immediate spiritual calls and qualifications for services in the church are still to be expected; but, on the contrary, we believe the assertion that they are the existing privilege of the church, is in strict accordance with the letter, and in the fullest harmony with the whole scope and spirit, of the New Testament dispensation.

Here, then, may be briefly enumerated the chief features of this fundamental Christian doctrine, as held by the Society of Friends; set forth, as they apprehend it to be, in the preceding and in many other passages of Holy Scripture.

1st. That the light of the Spirit of Christ enlightenth every man that cometh into the world.

2nd. That the dispensation of the Spirit in a larger and fuller sense than had been heretofore witnessed, is the peculiar privilege of the Christian covenant.

3rd. That the leading object of this gift is, and ever has been, to quicken the soul, and raise man from a state of sin, which separates from God, to a state of holiness and of acceptance with Him, through Jesus Christ.

4th. That some manifestation of the Spirit is given to every true member of the church, to fit him for the part assigned him, and that the great Head of the church does immediately call some to, and qualify

them for, those special services by which the body is edified.

5th. That, though not *looking* for any miraculous powers or prophetic gifts in the sense of foretelling future events, they do not dare in these, or in any other respects, to set limits to the Divine agency in this day; believing that no apprehension of danger authorizes us to limit the power of God, where He has not himself fully declared the limitation.

Nevertheless, let it be remembered, that the Society of Friends fully unites with other Christians in believing, that there can be no other message and covenant of mercy and peace to man, but that one everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, proclaimed by himself, and promulgated by those men whom He so largely and specially endowed for their work with the Spirit from on high; and also that they never looked for any other revelation of that message but that which is contained in the Holy Scriptures.

ESSAY  
ON THE  
DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS,  
AND ON THAT OF THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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THE supremacy of Jesus, over the little band of his followers, was never for a moment disputed. They were not permitted to call any man master, or to exalt each other with the title of Rabbi, Rabbi;—One was their Master—even Christ. Nor was this view of the subject obscured or weakened, after he had withdrawn his personal presence. Although he had “ascended up on high, far above all heavens,” he was still with them, by his Spirit; and they knew that he ruled supreme, not only over the church which he had purchased with his blood, but over the universe itself, for the church’s sake.\* They confessed that he was their High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek—the king of righteousness—the king of peace; and they lived in filial reliance upon his love.

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\* Eph. i. 20-23.

While they thus looked upon Christ as the Head of his *whole* church, the believers were soon planted in distinct communities; and in each of these it was their privilege to depend on the immediate government of their Lord. Wherever they were raised up and gathered together, whether few or many in number, there they found their ever present helper, friend, and teacher. They sat "under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to their taste."

But the dependence of the primitive Christians on their Holy High Priest and King, afforded them no pretext for a neglect of their duties as members of his body. The religion to which they had been introduced was found to be of a social character; its main practical feature was love: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."\* For the sake of that God and Saviour who was now the supreme object of their affections, they were willing to labour for the benefit of each other, and of the church; and this they did, according to their respective callings, under the government and influence of the Holy Ghost.

One obvious duty which devolved upon them, was to provide for the poor. They were prepared, in this respect as well as in others, to "do good unto all men, especially to them that were of the household of faith." Thus we find that the deacons were appointed in the very infancy of the church, to provide both the Greek and Hebrew widows with their daily

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\* John xiii. 35.

food,—a service of benevolence, for which seven men were chosen, of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” Liberal collections were afterward made, in the churches of Greece and Macedonia, for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

But we cannot doubt that the *spiritual welfare* of their fellow-believers was still nearer to their hearts; they were taught by the apostles to “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”\* “Brethren,” said Paul to the Galatians, “if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted — bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” † In order to effect the object here set forth by the apostle, the most important means must have been private, brotherly, exhortation and advice. When one Christian, in tender love, reprov’d another for his fault, and thus endeavoured to restore him to the fold of Christ, this was no improper interference with individual liberty—it was but one needful fruit of the law of love. “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not *suffer sin upon him*.” ‡

By our Saviour himself they were left in possession of a rule, which lay at the very foundation of Christian discipline; “Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he shall not hear

\* Heb. x. 24.

† Gal. vi. 1.

‡ Lev. xix. 17.

thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.”\*

Although the duty of private admonition rested on all true believers, as occasion might require it, yet it especially devolved on the most experienced members of the church. While the communities of Christians, in that day, were taught in the first place to submit to the government of Christ, and in the second, to exercise a mutual care among themselves, they were not left without rulers. “Obey them that have the rule over you,” said the apostle to the Hebrews, “for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”†

These persons were called indifferently, *elders* or *overseers*,‡ and although it sometimes happened that they possessed a gift for the ministry of the word, they were in their official capacity (as has been already remarked)§ distinct from the prophets or preachers. It was their duty to guard and nourish the people of God, “taking the *oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being *lords* over God’s

\* Matt. xviii. 15–17.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

‡ The word *ἐπίσκοπος*, rendered in our version “bishop,” signifies only an “overseer.”

§ See chap. vi. p. 145–147, of “Observations on the Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends,” by J. J. Gurney. First American Edition.



heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”\* In these labours of love they acted in behalf of the “Chief Shepherd,” at whose hands alone they were to receive their crown of glory; and although they were often ordained by the apostles, and other inspired persons, it was the Holy Ghost who *made* them overseers — it was the Chief Shepherd himself who called them into their office.

It was, indeed, a primary principle in the early Christian church, that whatsoever office any man occupied for the *spiritual edification* of his brethren, nothing short of divine authority and power could truly bestow the commission, or qualify for the work. Sometimes the gifts of Christians are ascribed to God the Father — “God hath set some in the church, first, apostles, secondarily, prophets, thirdly, teachers, &c.” † — Sometimes, to Christ — “He (Christ) gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” ‡ Sometimes to the Spirit — “All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” §

But although the “elders and overseers,” or “pastors and teachers,” were the leading persons in the church, and had an important sway in the government of the body, they exercised no exclusive power in the regulation of the churches; much less did any such power devolve on the prophets or preachers. On all subjects connected with the interests of reli-

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\* 1 Peter v. 1-3.

† Eph. iv. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

gion, and with the welfare and good order of the body, the ultimate authority, under Christ, rested on the *community of believers*.

Many instances are on record of meetings of the churches, for the consideration of such matters; and on these occasions, even the apostles were accustomed to act in unison with their less gifted brethren, and as members of an undivided body. When a new apostle was to be appointed in the place of Judas, the whole company of believers united in the nomination of Joseph and Matthias, and in that giving forth of the lots, which resulted in the choice of the latter.\* When deacons were to be set apart, who should undertake the care of the poor, it was upon *all the brethren* that the duty of selection devolved.† And on the same principle of discipline, the persons who were to accompany Paul in conveying the contributions of the European Christians to the poor saints at Jerusalem, were elected “by *the churches*.”‡

It was to the apostles and *brethren* at Jerusalem that Peter apologised, when he had been preaching the gospel to Cornelius and his family. It was to the *church* at Antioch that Paul and Barnabas, on returning from their mission, gave a report of their proceedings in the work of the gospel.§ And it was the same body of persons which brought them on their way, when they were again leaving that city, for their journey through Phenice and Samaria.||

That important discussion which resulted in the

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\* Acts i. 15–26.

† Acts vi. 3.

‡ 2 Cor. viii. 19.

§ Acts xiv. 27.

|| Acts xv. 3.

declaration of Gentile liberty from the yoke of the Jewish law, took place in a general assembly of the Christians at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas then stated their case to the "multitude" of believers; and the "whole church" united with the apostles in sending messengers to declare their will on the subject. The letters respecting it, addressed to the church of Antioch, were inscribed as coming from the apostles, and elders, and *brethren*.\*

On this occasion a rule, intended to be binding on all Gentile believers, was settled in a meeting of the *Lord's people*. But although the fixing of a general rule is a highly important act of discipline, it does not so nearly affect an individual, as the suspension of his own membership in the body. It is, therefore, satisfactory to find, that when an unfaithful professor was to be separated from communion with his brethren, this also was to be an act, not of the elders and overseers alone, but of the *church*. The directions of Paul to the Corinthians, respecting an offender of this description, are entirely to the point. "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *when ye are gathered together*, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord *Jesus*." † It is pro-

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\* Acts xv. 23.

† 1 Cor. v. 3-5.

bable that some painful disease was the punishment about to be inflicted through the Lord's power, on this transgressor; but there was also to be an act of excommunication—"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened."\* The whole passage contains an authority for the separation of an unfaithful member, *as an act of the body itself*—and it was by the same body, as we afterward find, that the offender, when penitent, was to be restored to his membership.†

Since *women* were not permitted to speak in the churches, except under the immediate influence of the Spirit,‡ and since they were forbidden to "usurp authority over the man," I conclude that no active part was assigned to them in public assemblies for the settlement of the affairs of the church. No such restriction, however, could be laid upon them, in case of their meeting together at any time, without their brethren, and it is certain that the elderly among them were intrusted with the instruction of their younger sisters. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness . . . . that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children; to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." §

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\* 1 Cor. v. 7.

† 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

‡ See Chapter VIII., "Observations, &c.," by J. J. Gurney.

§ Tit. ii. 4, 5.

On a similar principle, there could be no reason why the elders and overseers, and other gifted members of the church, should not hold select conferences on subjects which concerned their own station in the body; or even on points affecting the body at large, so long as they assumed no authority which interfered with the functions of the church itself. Examples of such conferences are afforded us in the history of the apostle Paul. When he went up by revelation to Jerusalem, he conversed on the subject of his own calling, with the apostles and others who were "of reputation" in the church. On another occasion, the *elders* of the church at Ephesus met him at Miletus, when he unfolded to them the principles on which he acted as a preacher of the gospel, and exhorted them to the faithful discharge of their peculiar duties.\* Again, it appears to have been by a select company of the same character, that he and Barnabas were separated from their brethren for their mission to lesser Asia.†

Now, whatsoever was the subject on which the primitive believers were called upon to deliberate,

\* Acts xx. 17.

† "Now there were in the church that was in Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. *And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away:*" Acts xiii. 1

they depended for counsel and direction on the Divine Head of the church, and acted *under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit*. Their democracy was safe, because it was also a theocracy. The church was enabled to conduct its own affairs, only because Christ was its ruler.

After giving directions to his disciples respecting the treatment of a delinquent brother—showing that, when private endeavours had failed, the offence was to be laid before the *church*—our Lord expressed himself as follows; “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” These expressions are best understood as relating to discipline, which was to be administered on earth, and to be confirmed “in heaven.” The divine sanction was to accompany the decision of the body, as in the case of the Corinthian transgressor, whom the church condemned, and whom (as we may infer from the passage) *the Lord* afflicted. A peculiar authority in these respects was, no doubt, bestowed on the apostles, but the same principle applied, in its measure, to the believers in general.

Now it is quite obvious, that whether the degree of this authority for binding and loosening was greater or less, the act of discipline could be confirmed in heaven only on one ground; namely, that in applying it, the Lord’s servants followed the counsels of their divine Master, and formed their conclusions under the influence of his Holy Spirit. Accordingly, our Lord concludes his discourse on the

subject by an express promise of a most cheering nature—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." \*

Certain it is, that the early believers were accustomed to realize this promise, not only when they met for the sole purpose of worship, but when their attention was directed to discipline—to affairs of whatsoever description, connected with the order and welfare of the body. Thus, in their first meeting after the ascension of Jesus, when the important duty devolved on them of setting apart an apostle, the Lord himself was present to listen to their prayers and to direct the lot; nor can we doubt, that when the seven deacons were chosen, the choice was guided by wisdom from above. The general rule already alluded to respecting the Gentile converts, was formed under a direct divine influence; for the written declaration of the church on the subject is thus prefaced — "It seemed good to the *Holy Ghost and to us* to lay upon you no greater burthen than these necessary things." †

When the company of prophets and teachers at Antioch was met in one place, and while "they ministered to the Lord and fasted," it was the *Holy Ghost* who said unto them, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." ‡ Again, when the Corinthian transgressor was to be excommunicated, and delivered up, for a season, to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, it was "in the name of the Lord Jesus" that the church

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\* Matt. xviii. 20.

† Acts xv. 28.

‡ Acts xiii. 2.

was to assemble for the purpose, and in dependence on his power alone, was the chastisement to be inflicted.\*

Thus it appears that, in primitive times, the discipline of the church of Christ was carefully maintained, and at the same time was conducted with remarkable simplicity. Certain great principles, not formally determined upon, but arising out of the nature of Christianity itself, pervaded the whole system. The *first* was, that Christ is the Supreme and only Head of his own church, who rules over her, and ministers to all her need; the *second*, that Christians are to care for the temporal and spiritual benefit one of another, in privacy and love. *Thirdly*, it was provided that the most experienced persons in the church, in the character of elders and overseers, should be the guardians of the flock, watching over them and ruling them in the Lord — their gifts for these purposes, being distinct from that of inspired preaching. *Fourthly*, it was universally understood, that these individuals were not to be lords over God's heritage, but that the final authority, on all questions of church government, rested on the Lord's people, in their collective capacity. *Lastly*, this authority could be duly exercised, and the discipline rightly conducted, only under the immediate control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through a steadfast adherence to these principles, the primitive Christians were established in the truth, and prospered.

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\* 1 Cor. v. 4.



They grew “up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”\* The power, the work, was the Lord’s, and his alone was the praise!

Christianity was established in the world under the most extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit ever witnessed among men. During all preceding ages of man’s history, indeed, the Lord had reserved for himself a church of believers, to whom were committed the oracles of God; but now the sun of righteousness had arisen, in all its splendor, upon a corrupt and slumbering world. After the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, his religion was spread among many nations, through the wondrous working of his own power. The miracles which the apostles and their companions wrought in his name, were precisely suited to the nature of their calling, as the promulgators of truths hitherto unknown; and under a divine influence, adequate to the occasion, they were enabled to write the books of the New Testament, which were to form the standard of Christian doctrine and practice in all succeeding ages.

Yet it is certain, that the truth, which was thus revealed with power, could maintain a permanent

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\* Eph. iv. 15, 16.

footing on the earth, only through the operation of the same Spirit; nor can we doubt that in every age of the church, and even amid its deepest corruptions, a people, through divine grace, was still preserved for the Lord. Hidden and scattered as the true church of Christ may often have been, and more or less weakened through the superstitions of men, still we have every reason to believe that a remnant of true believers has never failed from the earth; like the seven thousand men, in the days of Elijah the prophet, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And not only has there existed among Christians this continued work of grace, but fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit have, on various occasions, taken place, which have led to important consequences in the history of the church. When such men as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, and Bernard, were raised up to bear a noble testimony to the truth, even though that testimony was shaded with some portions of error—when Claudius of Turin fought single-handed against the corruptions of the day—when the Paulicians of Asia, in the ninth century, and the Cathari of Germany, in the eleventh, maintained a far purer system of doctrine and practice than was customary in the professing church—when, in the thirteenth century, Peter Waldo boldly proclaimed the doctrine of the cross, and the Lord's people, who had so long been dwelling in the Alpine valleys, openly declared, amid innumerable sufferings, their adherence to simple Christianity—when in the fourteenth and fifteenth centu-

ries Wickliffe and the Lollards in England, and Huss and his followers in Hungary and Bohemia, stemmed the tide of ecclesiastical corruption — and when, at last, in the sixteenth century, the reformation, under the banners of Luther, Melancthon, and other soldiers of Christ, burst forth with irresistible force in almost every part of Europe—it is impossible to deny that God was at work in the bosom of his church, and was carrying on his own gracious designs, by means of the especial effusions of his Holy Spirit.

On none of these occasions was there any revelation of new truth — any addition to original Christianity. There was only the renewed publication, again and again, of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, under different degrees of divine light, and with more or less of the darkening mixture of human wisdom, according to the features of each particular case.

The reformation, which took place in the sixteenth century, from the corruptions of the papal system, went far toward restoring the profession of Christianity to its native purity. But who can wonder that it did not go the *whole way* in this blessed and necessary work? And who is not aware that much was left among the protestant churches, which still required the reforming hand of divine wisdom and power?

In our own country the founders of that system of doctrine and discipline, which now distinguishes the established church of England, were generally men of enlightened minds and profound piety; and

many of them gave, at the stake, the *highest proof* of fidelity to the Lord Jesus. Yet they left a scope to the puritans and other nonconformist divines, for further efforts in the work of purification; and these, again, still retained many views and practices which by no means precisely accorded with the spirituality of the Gospel.

Now I conceive that it was under another and very powerful effusion of the one blessed Spirit, and for the purpose of carrying on the work of reformation, in the Christian church, to a greater extent than had been before experienced, that Friends were so remarkably raised up in the course of the following century. The Lord's call was sent to a very young person, in a situation of comparative obscurity; and it was after the patient endurance, for several years, of the deep baptism of mental conflict—after a long preparation of prayers and tears with searching of heart and searching of the Scriptures—that George Fox went forth, to proclaim among men the spirituality of true religion. No one can impartially peruse his history without perceiving that a remarkable power attended his ministry; many fellow-labourers under the same anointing were raised up, chiefly through his instrumentality; and multitudes of persons were weaned from a dependence on human systems in religion, to sit down under the teaching of Christ himself. Thus the first meetings of the people called Quakers were gathered and settled in almost every part of Great Britain and Ireland; and, before

very long, in several places on the continent of Europe, in the West Indies, and in North America.

The era when Friends arose in this country was one of great excitement, and it ought to be freely allowed, that some of them were at times carried off their centre by a warm imagination. In taking a calm review of their history, I am by no means prepared to justify all that they did, or all that they said. They were liable to error and infirmity like other men; they had their treasure in earthen vessels. We need not, therefore, be at all surprised, if we find them occasionally giving way to that enthusiasm in practice, and to that heat in argument, which were leading temptations of the day. But, while I willingly make these admissions, I am deliberately of opinion, that George Fox and his brethren were enabled to uphold a high standard of truth, and to make a very near approach to the incorruptness of primitive Christianity. While they were deeply read in the Scriptures, they gave themselves up to the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit. They discarded *expediency*, when it interfered with *principle*; and they were calmly resolved "to follow the Lamb," whithersoever he might lead them. The consequence was, that they renounced all merely ceremonial observances; all secular views in the pursuit and maintenance of religion; and all dependence on the systems of men, in the things of God.

From time to time they were gathered together in silence before the Lord; and such was their contrite state, that the floors of their meeting-houses were

often wetted with their tears. Nor did they dare to omit their public worship, which they regarded as an essential mark of their allegiance to the King of kings. In the midst of the fire of persecution, and when the dissenters of the day met only in private places, that they might avoid the terrors of the law, the despised Quakers persisted in the assembling of themselves together, and worshipped God in public, in the face of their enemies.

The same unbending principle they manifested in their uniform refusal to pay tithes — to join in the warfare of the world — and to swear even in courts of justice—to give that honour to men, which is due to God alone—or to use those forms of homage and compliment, which had no better origin than vanity and falsehood. In consequence of their firm Christian conduct in these matters, they underwent an amount and variety of suffering, which have not many parallels in the history of the church of Christ. Their goods were spoiled, and their families reduced to poverty; multitudes of them were thrown into filthy dungeons among the worst of felons; considerable numbers lost their lives in consequence of these hardships, and a few (in New England) suffered death by the hand of the executioner.

During this time of severe trial, they were enabled to exhibit the peaceful triumphs of Christian principle. So ardent was their love for each other, that they frequently offered to lie in prison for their brethren, body for body;\* and so undoubted was

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\* See "*Besse's Sufferings of the Quakers.*"

their integrity, that even by their persecutors their word was acknowledged to be as valid as an oath. Thus the name of Jeshurun, the "upright people," was truly applicable to them; and as was their integrity, so was their patience. Nothing daunted their fortitude or shook their perseverance. They quietly endured their sufferings, in submission to the will of God; and God did not forsake them. In the depth of the noisome prison-house, they were often permitted to feel the sweetness of his presence, and their mouths were filled with his praise.

Making a due allowance for the difference between heathen and Christian countries, we may perceive a remarkable similarity between the first settlement of the meetings of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, and the planting of the primitive Christian churches. In both cases, societies were raised up in various distinct places, consisting of persons who differed in a *striking* manner from the surrounding community, and who were associated in the bond of common principles. At once distinguished from their fellow-countrymen, and agreeing among themselves, the early Friends were well compacted together, and were baptized by one Spirit into one body.

Now I conceive that their system of discipline, like that of the primitive Christians, originated in the very nature of their soeial and religious union. Gathered together by a divine hand, they were taught to love as brethren, and to watch over each other for good; nor can it be doubted, that from the first rise

of the society, the most pious and experienced of their number were led, in an especial manner, to superintend the flock, and to supply, as far as possible, both their temporal and spiritual need. "As the church of God in those days increased," said one of our worthy elders about the year 1655, in reference to the meeting of Friends at Colechester, "my care daily increased, and the weight of things relating both to the outward and inward condition of poor Friends, came upon me . . . . the more I came to feel and perceive the love of God and his goodness to me, the more was I humbled and bowed in my mind to serve him, and to serve the least of his people among whom I walked; and as the word of wisdom began to spring in me, and the word of God grew, so I became a counsellor of those who were tempted in like manner as I had been."\*

In the year 1656 a general meeting of Friends was held at Balby, near Doncaster, which issued many important precepts on subjects connected with the good order and welfare of the body—such as the method of proceeding with delinquents, and the duties of husbands, wives, parents, children, servants, and masters, justice in trade, and faithfulness in the performance of civil duties. A similar meeting was held at Skipton, A. D. 1660, "for the affairs of the church, both in this nation, and beyond the seas." This, indeed, was only one session of a meeting established by the advice of George Fox, for the

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\* *Stephen Crisp, Introd. to Book of Extracts, p. xix.*



purpose of caring for the Society, and of providing for its poor members, under the pressure of persecution.

In the meantime, there were established, by degrees, quarterly meetings, which exercised a general superintendence over the Friends *in each county*; and, for a time, the discipline of the society mainly rested on these bodies.

But in the year 1666, the form of our church government became more detailed and settled. George Fox says in his journal under that date, "Then was I moved of the Lord to recommend the setting up of five monthly meetings of *men and women Friends* in the city (London) besides the women's meetings and the quarterly meetings, to take care of God's glory, and to admonish and exhort such as walked disorderly or carelessly, and not according to truth. For, whereas Friends had had only quarterly meetings, now truth was spread, and Friends were grown more numerous, I was moved to recommend the setting up of monthly meetings throughout the nation." In 1668, he writes thus—"the men's meetings were settled throughout the nation. The quarterly meetings were generally settled before. I wrote also into Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Barbadoes, and several parts of America, advising Friends to settle their monthly meetings in those countries, for they had their quarterly meetings before."

The quarterly meetings now received reports of the state of the Society from the monthly meetings of which they were severally composed, and gave such

directions to them as they thought right. Finally, in the year 1678, a general meeting of representatives from the quarterly meetings was convened in London; which received reports from those bodies, deliberated on the state of the Society, issued advices in the form of an epistle, and finally agreed to meet again, the following year, in like manner. This representative assembly has since continued to meet every year in London, at or near "the time called Whitsuntide," with unbroken regularity, to the present date; and in it centres the authority of discipline for the whole Society in Great Britain.

The reader will have observed that George Fox was led to recommend the setting up of *women's meetings* both in London and in country places. These meetings, before very long, became as regular as those of the brethren; being held at the same time with them, and being constituted on the same orderly system. While it belonged to the brethren only to form rules for the government of the Society, and ultimately to carry them into effect, the women's meetings were established for the purpose of exercising a wholesome care over their own sex. To this object, their attention was, from the beginning, exclusively directed, as is the case in the present day.

We do not, however, forget that the gifts of the Spirit, and among others that of spiritual discernment, are freely bestowed upon Christians of both sexes. When, therefore, our ministers apply to their monthly meetings for leave to travel in the work of the ministry, the women unite with the men, in the

consideration of the subject. For the same reason they, as well as the brethren, are often appointed to the station of *elder*, in which capacity it is their duty to watch over the ministry of both men and women.

The free scope allowed to women in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, and the share assigned to them in the discipline of the church, are circumstances of a distinguishing character, which have produced very beneficial results to the Society of Friends. Not only have the Christian care and counsel as well as the Gospel ministry of women been greatly blessed to the body at large; but under the grace of God, a more than common stability has been imparted to the female character — this has wrought well for our domestic comfort, for our temporal safety, and for our religious edification.

Previously to the regular institution of our annual assembly, meetings had been occasionally held in London, consisting only of the ministers of the Society, who were convened from various parts of the country, in order to confer on subjects connected with their common cause. These conferences continued to be held in connexion with the yearly meeting; and were soon joined by the elders, on whom it devolved to cherish and guard the ministry. In process of time similar meetings were formed, in connexion with the quarterly and monthly meetings, in every part of the country, and they are still regularly maintained. Their specific object is to exercise a watchful care over their own part of the body; and they have been found of great use in assisting to

secure the right religious standing, and the harmonious operations, of those among us who are called to labour in the Gospel, or to watch over the flock of Christ. But the meetings of ministers and elders have no concern with the conduct of the discipline; they are entirely destitute of legislative authority.

That authority has uniformly rested with the yearly meeting — that is, with the body at large;\* and the monthly meetings were set up for the express purpose of carrying the discipline into effect. They are the hands of the body, the executors of the law, entrusted with a parental authority over their individual members. In point of fact, it is by means of these subordinate assemblies that the church, in its separate and local associations, regulates its own affairs, and governs itself.

It cannot be necessary, on the present occasion, to enter at large into a view of the business which devolves on our *monthly meetings*. No sooner were they regularly established, than a variety of objects came under their attention; the care of the poor, the protection and assistance of the afflicted and imprisoned, the Christian and orderly conducting of marriages and burials, the registration of births and deaths, the education of children, the settlement of differences to the exclusion of legal proceedings, were all of them subjects which claimed the attention of

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\* The Yearly Meeting, like our other meetings for discipline, although, strictly speaking, composed of representatives, is open to any members of the Society — of course, the men and women being convened separately.

these executive bodies, and which continue to do so to the present day.

By far the most important of their functions, however, is the spiritual care of their individual members. This care is especially called forth by certain enquiries, respecting the moral and religious state of the body, which are answered periodically for the information of the quarterly meetings.\* Each little church among us is thus brought, at certain periods, to a deliberate view of the condition of its members, and advice is often extended as occasion may require.†

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\* The monthly meetings constitute the lowest class of our meetings for the *discipline* of the church. A single monthly meeting, however, often comprehends two or more "preparative meetings," which severally draw up answers to these enquiries. The answers of the monthly meeting itself, are formed from those of its preparative meetings.

† These enquiries are as follows:—

I. Are meetings for worship and discipline kept up, and do Friends attend them duly, and at the time appointed; and do they avoid all unbecoming behaviour therein?

II. Is there among you any growth in the Truth?

III. Are Friends preserved in love one toward another; if differences arise, is due care taken speedily to end them; and are Friends careful to avoid and discourage talebearing and detraction?

IV. Do Friends endeavour by example and precept to train up their children, servants, and those under their care, in a religious life and conversation, consistent with our Christian profession; and in plainness of speech, behaviour, and apparel?

V. Is it the care of all Friends to be frequent in reading the Holy Scriptures, and do those who have children, servants, and others under their care, train them up in the practice of this religious duty?

Again, when cases occur of breaches of morality, or of a departure from our more important Christian testimonies, it is the monthly meeting which must *ultimately* sit in judgment on the transgressor; and

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VI. Are Friends just in their dealings, and punctual in fulfilling their engagements?

VII. Do Friends avoid all vain sports and places of diversion, gaming, all unnecessary frequenting of taverns and other public-houses, excess in drinking, and other intemperance?

VIII. Are Friends faithful in bearing our Christian testimony against receiving and paying tithes, priests' demands, and those called church-rates?

IX. Are Friends faithful in our testimony against bearing arms, and being in any manner concerned in the militia, in privateers, or armed vessels, or dealing in prize-goods?

X. Are the necessities of the poor among you properly inspected and relieved; and is good care taken of the education of their offspring?

XI. Is due care taken, when any thing appears to require it, that the rules of our discipline be timely and impartially put in practice?

XII. Is there any appearance of convincement among you, and have any been joined to our society on that ground since last year?

XIII. Is care taken early to admonish such as appear inclined to marry in a manner contrary to the rules of our society; and in due time to deal with such as persist in refusing to take counsel?

XIV. Have you two or more faithful friends, appointed by the monthly meeting, as overseers in each particular meeting; are the rules respecting removals duly observed; are the general advices read as directed; and are the lists of your members revised and corrected once in the year?

XV. Are Friends annually advised to keep correct and

either pass over the fault on receiving proofs of repentance, or separate him, for a season at least, from his fellowship with the body.

It is not without meaning that a stress is here

clear accounts, and carefully to inspect the state of their affairs once in the year?

XVI. Are Friends clear of defrauding the king of his customs, duties, and excise, and of using or dealing in goods suspected to be run?

XVII. Do you keep a record of the prosecutions and sufferings of your members; is due care taken to register all marriages, births, and burials: are the titles of your meeting-houses, burial-grounds, &c., duly preserved and recorded: are the rules respecting registers and trust-property observed; and are all legacies and donations properly secured and recorded and duly applied?

The following ADVICES of the yearly meeting are read, at least once in the year, in the quarterly, monthly, and preparative meetings of men and women Friends; they are to be read in the men's and women's meetings separately:—

Take heed, dear friends, we entreat you, to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, who leads, through unfeigned repentance and living faith in the Son of God, to reconciliation with our Heavenly Father, and to the blessed hope of eternal life, purchased for us by the one suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Be earnestly concerned in religious meetings reverently to present yourselves before the Lord, and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to worship God through Jesus Christ.

Be in the frequent practice of waiting upon God in private retirement with prayer and supplication, honestly examining yourselves as to your growth in grace, and your preparation for the life to come.

Be careful to make a profitable and religious use of those

laid on the word *ultimately*; for Friends have always upheld the importance of the preceding steps, which ought, if possible, to take place in dealing with delinquents. The first of these is *private admonition*—

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portions of time on the first day of the week, which are not occupied by our meetings for worship.

Live in love as Christian brethren, ready to be helpful one to another, and to sympathize with each other in the trials and afflictions of life.

Follow peace with all men, desiring the true happiness of all; and be liberal to the poor, endeavouring to promote their temporal, moral, and religious well-being.

With a tender conscience, and in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel, take heed to the limitations of the Spirit of Truth, in the pursuit of the things of this life.

Maintain strict integrity in all your transactions in trade, and in your other outward concerns, remembering that you will have to account for the mode of acquiring, and the manner of using, your possessions.

Watch, with Christian tenderness, over the opening minds of your offspring; inure them to habits of self-restraint and filial obedience; carefully instruct them in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and seek for ability to imbue their minds with the love of their Heavenly Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctifier.

Observe simplicity and moderation in the furniture of your houses, and in the supply of your tables, as well as in your personal attire, and that of your families.

Be diligent in the private and daily family reading of the Holy Scriptures; and guard carefully against the introduction of improper books into your families.

Be careful to place out children, of all degrees, with those Friends whose care and example will be most likely to conduce to their preservation from evil; prefer such assistants, servants, and apprentices, as are members of our religious



“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother!”

“Admonish a friend,” said the son of Sirach, “it may be that he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish a friend, it may be that he hath not said it, and if he have, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend, for many times it is a slander, and believe not every tale.”\* The views of this wise, though apocryphal writer, are coincident with those which our Society has always endeavoured to maintain. We consider it to be our individual duty to communicate *in private*

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society; not demanding exorbitant apprentice fees, lest you frustrate the care of Friends in these respects.

Encourage your apprentices and servants of all descriptions to attend public worship, making way for them herein: and exercise a watchful care for their moral and religious improvement.

Be careful to make your wills and settle your outward affairs in time of health; and, when you accept the office of guardian, executor, or trustee, be faithful and diligent in the fulfilment of your trust.

Finally, dear Friends, let your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel. Exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Watch over one another for good; and when occasions of uneasiness first appear in any, let them be treated with privacy and tenderness, before the matter be communicated to another; and Friends, every where, are advised to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—1791.—1801.—1833.

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\* Eccles. xix. 13–15.

with a supposed offender, before we mention his fault to a third person. If we then find that it has not been committed, our care on his account is removed. If, on the contrary, he is guilty of it, our own adherence to an honourable secrecy may greatly increase the efficacy of our endeavours to restore him to the right way.

But important as is the *individual* duty of private admonition, it affords no pretext for the absence, in any church, of an official overseership. It is an essential part of our system of discipline, that as far as circumstances will allow, "two or more faithful friends" should be appointed to this office in each meeting. The proper business of these persons is to exercise a godly care over all the members of the body; to watch against occasions of offence, to settle disputes, and to endeavour to reclaim delinquents, when the evil *first* appears; to strengthen the weak, to rebuke the gainsayers; to reprove the careless; and to maintain, by every means in their power, that purity and harmony in the body, which best adorn our Christian profession. Nor must it be forgotten, that those whom the Holy Spirit raises up to be overseers in the church, ought not only to show, but to lead the way — to be examples to the flock "in all holy conversation and godliness."

I conceive that the elders and overseers in our meetings — did they fully occupy the place assigned to them — would very nearly correspond in point of authority and function, with the same officers in the primitive church. And it is no less clear that it is

the Christian duty of the younger and less experienced members of the body, to render to them a ready deference and obedience, as to those who watch over their souls, and must give an account of their stewardship. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be *clothed with humility*; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." \*

In communicating with a brother who has been "overtaken in a fault," it will ever be the first endeavour of the truly Christian overseer, to "*restore* such an one in the spirit of meekness." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; *and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil*, who are taken captive by him at his will." †

Nor ought the effort of the church, to reclaim her wandering members, to end with the kindly offices of the overseers. When the third step commanded by our Saviour has been taken, and the collective body is informed of the offender's fault, repeated visits should be made to him by persons selected for the purpose, and every endeavour used to bring him to repentance. Such, I trust, is the usual practice of our monthly meetings. Yet I believe there is

\* 1 Peter v. 5.

† 2 Tim. ii. 21-26.

often a danger lest our care over transgressors should cease after disownment has taken place. Where there is any love for the truth in the disowned party, or any open door for continued efforts on his account, his separation from the body ought surely to be regarded as merely temporary; and it is our bounden duty, with all diligence and prayer, to seek his restoration. "Sufficient to such a man," said the apostle Paul on an occasion of this kind, "is this punishment which was inflicted of many. So that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest, perhaps, such an one should be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow."\* To conduct our discipline with impartiality and vigour, and steadily to maintain its *integrity*, is indeed of essential importance to the welfare of the body. Yet the main characteristic of Christian discipline is love — that love which seeks, above all things, the salvation of sinners.†

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\* 2 Cor. ii. 6-8.

† The spirit of tenderness, which breathes through the instructions of George Fox, in regard to the treatment of delinquents, is worthy of especial notice, and would, if there were no other, afford ample evidence of the soundness of his Christian character. In one of his early epistles he thus writes: "Now, concerning Gospel order, though the doctrine of Jesus Christ requireth his people to admonish a brother or sister twice, before they tell the church, yet that limiteth none, so as that they shall use no longer forbearance. And it is desired of all, before they publicly complain, that they wait in the power of God, to feel if there is no more required of them to their brother or sister, before

Although the executive authority rests only with our monthly meetings, provision is made for their help on occasions which require it. Thus, when ministers receive certificates to travel beyond the seas, the authority of the monthly meeting must be confirmed

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they expose him or her to the church. Let this be weightily considered, and all such as behold their brother or sister in a transgression, go not in a rough, light, or upbraiding spirit, to reprove or admonish him or her: but in the power of the Lord and spirit of the Lamb, and in the wisdom and love of the Truth, which suffers thereby, to admonish such an offender. So may the soul of such a brother or sister be seasonably and effectually reached unto and overcome, and they may have cause to bless the name of the Lord on their behalf, and so a blessing may be rewarded into the bosom of that faithful and tender brother or sister who so admonished them. And so keep the church order of the Gospel, according as the Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded; that is 'If thy brother offend thee, speak to him betwixt thee and him alone; and if he will not hear, take two or three, and if he will not hear two or three, then tell it to the church.' And if any one do miscarry, admonish them gently in the wisdom of God, so that you may preserve him and bring him to condemnation, and preserve him from further evils, which it is well if such do not run into, and it will be well for all to use the gentle wisdom of God toward them in their temptations, and condemnable actions; and, with using gentleness, to bring them to condemn their evil, and to let their condemnation go as far as their bad action has gone and no farther, to defile the minds of Friends or others; and so to clear God's truth and people, and to convert the soul to God, and preserve them out of further evils.—So be wise in the wisdom of God." See *Introduction to the last edition of the Book of Extracts.*

by that of the quarterly meeting, before they are at liberty to proceed.\* Again when elders are to be nominated, the quarterly meeting appoints a committee, to assist a committee of the monthly meeting, in proposing names for the consideration of the latter body. In general, it devolves on the quarterly meetings † to extend help, as required, either by advice or deputation, to their subordinate bodies; and of this duty they are, from time to time, reminded by the following enquiry:—"Are you careful to give to your monthly meetings that assistance which your place in the body and their state require?"

This enquiry, together with twelve of those which are answered by the monthly to the quarterly meetings, are answered by the quarterly meeting to our annual assembly, which is thus enabled to form a correct view of the state of the society. The care of the yearly meeting itself over the society seldom fails to be evinced, by written advices, as well as by a printed general epistle; and when any quarterly meeting, under circumstances of trial and difficulty, applies for assistance, a deputation is, for the most

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\* When a minister from England is about to visit Ireland, this rule is not *imperative*. On the other hand, when the service which he has in view, lies in *foreign parts*, he must obtain the sanction of the yearly meeting of ministers and elders, or of its subordinate body (called the morning meeting) as well as that of his monthly and quarterly meetings.

† In some parts of the kingdom the meetings answering to the quarterly meetings are held only *three times*, and in Scotland only twice in the year.

part, appointed for the purpose. Occasionally, indeed, the yearly meeting has set apart a large committee, for a general visit in Christian love to all its inferior meetings; and many can testify that these labours of love have been blessed both to those who paid the visits, and to those who received them.

There exists, moreover, a standing committee of the yearly meeting, consisting of numerous friends of London and its vicinity, and of correspondents in the country, which sits at least once a month, during the intervals between one yearly meeting and another. It is the duty of this important body—called “the meeting for sufferings”—to extend advice and assistance to the Society, or to any part of it, under the exigencies which may arise; to provide supplies of the standard books of Friends; to watch the proceedings of the legislature, as far as they affect the Society; to exercise a friendly care over ministers who are travelling abroad; to correspond with Friends in foreign parts; and to protect the interests of the body at large.

Thus is our little church assisted and edified, under the cherishing hand of our Holy Redeemer, by the mutual care and sympathy of its component parts.

It is satisfactory to reflect on the unbroken regularity with which the system now detailed has been maintained in our Society, for more than a century and a half from year to year, and from generation to generation, Friends have kept up their monthly,

quarterly, and yearly meetings, and have never found occasion materially to alter the plan so wisely laid down for them by their predecessors. This plan has been, from the beginning, remarkable for that simplicity on the one hand, and that precision on the other, which, under Providence, could alone insure its usefulness and stability; and it affords a clear evidence that there was nothing in the religious views of the early Quakers, opposed to the principles of Christian *order*. Some persons, indeed, there were, under our name, of a wild and ungoverned spirit, who refused to submit to these wholesome provisions; but, by the Society at large, they were embraced with gladness, and have ever since been found easy to apply, and salutary in their operations.

While we cannot reasonably doubt, that, in constructing this plan, George Fox and his coadjutors were favoured with the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, it is probable that their attention was closely fixed on the pattern of discipline presented to them in the *New Testament*. Their system was indeed more developed than that of the primitive believers is known to have been, especially as it regards the subordination of one class of meetings to another; but with regard to main principles, as well as in many distinct particulars, the views and practices of Friends, with respect to church order, appear to be the *same* as those of the primitive Christians.

The acknowledgment of Christ as the only Head and Priest of his people—the direct dependence upon him as the present Ruler of the church—the divine



origin of the gift of the ministry, and the absence of all human restriction, as to the person who might exercise it—the voluntary support of the poor—the appointment, in every church, of deacons to manage the funds raised for that purpose, and of elders and overseers to watch over the flock of Christ; all being distinct, in their official characters, from the prophets or preachers—the settlement of disputes, not before the magistrates of the land, but by the arbitration of brethren—the private admonition of offenders as the first step in discipline—the care extended over women by overseers of their own sex—the select conferences of preachers and elders—the making of rules, the choosing of officers, the disownment and restoration of offenders, by the *assembled* believers—are points which distinguish the simple religious polity of the earliest Christians: and all these points are steadily maintained in the Society of Friends.

In conclusion, however, there are two subjects connected with our view of church-government, which appear to claim *especial* notice. The first is the *absence of all ecclesiastical domination*, or of any distinction between a priesthood in power, and a laity in subjection. No such distinction appears to have been known among the immediate followers of Christ, or in the first and purest age of the churches which they planted—and none such exists among ourselves. Our views on this point are indeed by no means opposed to the just influence of the most experienced members of the church, or to the proper authority of appointed overseers; but we consider ourselves to

be brethren, possessed of equal rights: and we conceive it to be the duty and privilege of the *church*, to conduct its own affairs, and govern itself. And here there is no place, on the part of individuals, for a proud independence, or impatience of restraint; because, as far as Christian discipline extends, every single member is controlled and governed by the body at large.

Now it is very obvious, as has been already observed, that such a form of church-government can be safe and salutary, only while we maintain a still higher principle — that of the supremacy and perpetual superintendence of Christ himself. This is a doctrine on which Friends have at all times delighted to dwell. Often have they been led to call to mind the glowing words of the prophet—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the *government shall be upon his shoulder*, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God;”\* — often have they found occasion to recur to the doctrine of the apostle, that God hath put “*all things*” under the feet of Jesus, and “given him to be Head *over all things* to the church.” †

What then is the agency by which Christ conducts his reign, and orders the affairs of his universal people? Scripture and experience alike declare that it is *the agency of the Holy Spirit*. It is by his Spirit that he brings his children into subjection to his will, qualifies them for their respective offices in

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\* Isa. ix. 6.

† Eph. i. 22.

the body, and guides them individually and collectively, in their course of duty.

The second point to which I was anxious to allude is this — the belief of Friends, that a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to *profit withal*; and that the living members of the church, in their endeavours to promote the religious welfare of others, will not fail to receive, as they humbly seek it, his gracious aid and *guidance*. Whether in such endeavours, we act as private individuals, or in the official character of overseers of the flock, it is still in dependence on our Divine Master, and in obedience to the government of his Spirit, that our duties ought to be performed. We believe that it is thus, and thus only, that we can with confidence offer up the prayer of the Psalmist, “Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea the work of our hands establish thou it.”\*

But further — when Christians meet in their corporate capacity, for the purpose of regulating the affairs of the church, and of promoting the cause of religion, Christ is their *rightful president*. And it is our firm belief, that as they reverently wait upon him, they will find him present to assist their deliberations, to prompt their efforts, and to direct their decisions.

That such was the happy experience of the primitive believers has already been shown from Scripture; and there is surely no good reason why Christians, in the present day, did they fully rely on God,

\* Ps. xc. 17.

should not enjoy a sufficient measure of the same blessed privilege.

We, therefore, consider it to be our duty to conduct all our meetings for discipline, with immediate reference to the government of Christ and to the guidance of his Spirit. Whether we are engaged in appointing officers; in acknowledging ministers; in deliberating on their prospects of service; in admitting members; in dealing with delinquents; in extending advice to subordinate meetings; or in discussing propositions made with a view to the welfare of the body — whatever subject, indeed, connected with religion and morality may occupy our attention — we believe it to be right, humbly to wait for divine direction, and to yield to that judgment, on the subject before us, which appears to be most consistent with the mind of *Christ*.

On the general maxim, that of every question which can arise in the church, there must be some *right* conclusion, and in the further belief, that as they diligently seek his counsel, Christ will lead his dependent followers into that conclusion, we admit, in our meetings for discipline, of no division of members — of no settlement of any point by majority. Neither have these assemblies, any more than our meetings for worship, a human president. The clerk collects and records the judgment of his brethren, and it is his duty, during the course of every discussion, to take care that proper order be preserved. But he has no personal authority over the assembly

—no power to put any subject to the vote—no casting vote of his own.

That this is a principle worthy of our Christian profession, and eminently conducive to the welfare of the church, cannot with any reason be denied; and although its *full effect* may often be prevented by the infirmity of our nature, we are bound to acknowledge that it works well in practice. I am not aware that a single instance has occurred in this country, of the settlement of any question in a meeting for discipline—monthly, quarterly, or yearly—by the division of its members. Have we not then much cause for thankfulness to Him who raised up our forefathers by his power, that he still condescends to preserve us, as a people, in some degree of practical dependence on his own authority; that he still brings us, from time to time, into the same judgment; that he still enables us, when our opinions differ, to condescend one to another *in love*?

Certain it is, that the more we are weaned from the eagerness of the carnal mind, and brought to wait patiently on the Lord, the better we shall be prepared to receive and follow his counsel; the more eminently we shall enjoy the **UNITY OF THE SPIRIT, IN THE BOND OF PEACE.**

**THE END.**















