

The
Yearly Meeting's Epistle,
1822.

William Phillips, Printer,
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THE
EPISTLE
FROM THE
YEARLY MEETING,
HELD IN
LONDON,

BY ADJOURNMENTS, from the 22d of the Fifth Month, to the
31st of the same, inclusive, 1822,

To the *QUARTERLY* and *MONTHLY MEETINGS* of *FRIENDS*, in
GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, AND ELSEWHERE.

DEAR FRIENDS,

WE have again to acknowledge the unmerited mercy of our Heavenly Father. We have been sensible of a renewal of our strength from Him, the inexhaustible Source of good; in which we have been united one unto another, and have felt the current of Christian love to flow to all our dear brethren and sisters. Our beloved elder friends, both present and absent, living in different parts of the nation, who love the Truth, and who have, through the course of many years, endeavoured faithfully to serve their Creator, are brought near unto us in the fellowship of the everlasting Gospel. We desire that it may please the Lord to comfort and strengthen these in their declining years: that He who has been their morning light, may be their evening song.

We have at this time been renewedly convinced, that the gathering and establishing of our religious Society, was not the effect of human wisdom. It pleased the Lord by the powerful influence of his Eternal Word, on the hearts of our faithful predecessors, to prepare them to receive the Truth in the love of it. They consulted not with flesh and blood, but obeyed the heavenly call. They were strengthened to bear, with firmness and meekness, the scoffs, and persecutions, and imprisonments, to which they were subjected. In supporting their religious testimonies, they sought not the praise of men, but the approbation of God. Believing that their views of the design in the coming of Christ, and of the nature of his dispensation, were confirmed to their understandings, by the power of his Spirit, they suffered freely and cheerfully for his name. Their patience and fortitude, and their firm reliance on the Lord alone for deliverance from the hands of their persecutors, gave clear proof of their sincerity, and ultimately secured a free and undisturbed profession of their religious principles. And it has been under the influence of the same Almighty Power, that we have been preserved a united religious Body, and that these testimonies have been faithfully borne amongst us from generation to generation.

The

The great truths of Christian doctrine are of individual application; and we feel it to be our duty to press upon all our members closely to examine, each for himself, how far he is building on Christ, the sure foundation. Are you, dear friends, daily waiting, in faith, before the Lord for the gentle intimations of his Spirit? are you, with alacrity of heart, yielding to the discoveries of the light of Truth, and thus preparing the way for further manifestations of the Divine will? It is indeed of especial importance, that, in the first place, you seek for the aid of the Holy Spirit, to enable you to perform all the commandments of Christ;—openly to acknowledge, by life and conversation, that you look unto Him, as your example, your leader, and your Saviour. The talents with which you are intrusted, and for the right use of which you must sooner or later render an account, are never occupied so acceptably in the Divine sight, as when they are cheerfully and unreservedly devoted to the service and disposal of Him who gave them. Whenever these talents are employed on the great truths of redemption, and other articles of Christian faith most surely believed amongst us, let it be done under a humbling sense of the limited powers of the human mind, and with reverence and fear, as in the Divine presence. Then, we believe, there will be abundant cause to acknowledge the manifold blessings which the Lord has provided for all, through Christ, our holy Redeemer.

Each of us is assailed by his peculiar temptations. Amidst the various besetments by which we are surrounded, some have to contend with a love of money; others are liable to give way either to a hasty or an ungenerous temper; others to an indulgence in the fading pleasures and flatteries of the world: but it is the blessed nature of the religion of Jesus, to regulate our affections, to change our hearts, and to establish us in charity, meekness, and self-denial. Examine yourselves, then, daily, and see whether it is your sincere and fervent desire, that the words of your mouths, and the meditations of your hearts, may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord; and that He may be indeed your Strength and your Redeemer.

Ps. xix. 14.

Beloved brethren and sisters—our earnest concern for all is, that each may stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We rejoice in the belief that there are more than a few amongst us, at the present day, by whom the Christian testimonies committed to our early friends are felt to be a most important trust. These we counsel to continue firm in their respective allotments; and, whatever trials they may meet with, to persevere unto the end. It is a privilege not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for him: this view of the subject ought not however to exalt but to humble us. And let no one think that *he* is exempt from taking his part in the promotion of the cause of Truth: all are not called to the same prominent station; but each has his respective duties to perform, by the due discharge of which, the harmony and strength of the Body will be increased. And we believe that we are, at no time, more qualified to fill up our ranks in righteousness, than when we are concerned that the testimonies of Truth may not fall from our hands; and when it is our earnest, secret prayer, that our light may so shine before men that others seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Gal. v. 1.

Phil. i. 29.

Mat. v. 16.

Love

Love and charity towards others are essential features in the religious character. They excite in us a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of our friends ; they prompt us to sympathize with them in their troubles, and, in real kindness, to offer a word of encouragement, and to extend a hand of help. When they are the habitual clothing of the mind, they check the first inclination to speak to the disadvantage of another, and induce us to consider what is our real motive in proceeding to depreciate his character. These Christian virtues are compatible with a firm adherence to our own religious principles, and with a steadfast care to observe that line of conduct which it may be right for us to pursue. They enlarge the heart towards the whole human race ; they lead us to rejoice in the extension of pure, vital Christianity, whatever may be the denomination amongst men, by which the disciples, engaged in its diffusion, are designated.

Dear friends, we still fear that some amongst us are too earnest in the pursuit of the things of time. We entreat these to consider whether they may not thereby cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of by others. May we all be loosened from the spirit of this world : may we also be careful that all our transactions in business be such as will bear the strictest investigation of upright men ; and be sure that we have a reasonable prospect of fulfilling all the pecuniary engagements which we contract. And should any, in consequence of diminished profits, be tempted to extend their concerns in trade, let them carefully examine their motives ; and trust in the Lord for his blessing, even on a very limited provision, rather than endanger their advancement in the Christian course, by becoming too deeply involved in the cares and toils of this life.

The situation of many of our members, in some districts, arising from the pressure of the times, has again claimed our sympathy. We feel for all who are brought into trouble ; but more particularly for those whose change in their outward condition, whilst they were honestly providing for their families, may have been occasioned by circumstances which it was not in their power to control. We would tenderly encourage such to bear their reverses with a patient, submissive mind, and to be very careful that they do not increase their own difficulties by any hasty, unadvised attempts to extricate themselves from them. May they, whilst endeavouring, with diligence and prudence, to do their part well, fix, in the first place, their hopes of support, under these trials, on the tender compassion of their Lord.

We have received, as in former years, accounts of the sufferings of our members in the support of our Christian testimony against tithes and other ecclesiastical demands. The amount, including the costs and charges of the distraints, together with a few demands of a military nature, is upwards of Fourteen thousand five hundred pounds.

We have maintained our epistolary intercourse with our dear friends in Ireland, and with our distant brethren of all the American Yearly Meetings ; and we are comforted in observing, from the written testimonials of their love, that, in the various meetings with which we correspond, there are many to whom the testimonies of Truth and the doctrines of the Gospel continue to be precious.

The cruelties and horrors of the Slave-Trade have, at this time, deeply interested our feelings. We have heard with sorrow that this trade, with all its attendant evils and miseries, is still pursued, by the subjects of several foreign powers, to a very great extent. As a testimony of our belief that it is a disgrace to any people professing the Christian name, we have been engaged to issue an Address to the inhabitants of Europe on the iniquity of the traffic. We recommend the unhappy victims of it to your continued pity and commiseration, and we desire that the minds of friends may be frequently exercised in secret before the Lord not only on their behalf, but for those who, by pursuing this odious traffic, are doing violence to all law, both moral and divine, and are increasing their guilt to an alarming extent in the sight of a merciful but righteous God.

Isa. xxxii.
17.

Dear friends—"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." We reverently acknowledge that this work is the Lord's, through his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, our blessed Redeemer.

In the love of the Gospel, we bid you Farewell.

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting, by

JOSIAH FORSTER,

Clerk to the Meeting this Year.