

**A BRIEF EXPOSITION AND VINDICATION
OF SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF
THE ORIGINAL DOCTRINES, PRINCIPLES,
AND PRACTICES OF THE RELIGIOUS
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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A brief exposition and vindication of some of the most important of the original doctrines, principles, and practices of the Religious Society of Friends by Charles Perry

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CHARLES PERRY

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BY

CHARLES PERRY.

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Anonymous donor

At a Meeting for Sufferings, held at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on the 5th day of the Eighth Month, 1885,

The reading of a manuscript entitled "A Brief Exposition and Vindication of some of the most Important of the Original Doctrines, Principles, and Practices of the Religious Society of Friends," by Charles Perry, which was commenced at our sitting on the 13th of the Sixth Month last, was now concluded to our satisfaction, and he is left at liberty to publish the same, with the approval of this meeting.

Taken from the minutes.

THOMAS PERRY, Clerk.

INTRODUCTION.

BY way of introduction to the following pages it may be said that Robert Barclay, of Ury, Scotland, about the year 1675, published that most able and thorough explanation and vindication of the principles and doctrines of the Religious Society of Friends, "An Apology for the True Christian Divinity," which is most admirably adapted to its noble purpose, and remains to be the standard authority for which it was designed.

This work, which is acknowledged by all sound Friends to be conclusive and unanswerable, has from that early day stood before the Christian world without any successful controversy or opposition. But it is somewhat extensive and full, and for this reason is not so generally read and considered as it otherwise would be. And although this effort of mine at a brief explanation and defense of some of the most important of our principles and practices was at first thought of only as a record of my conviction of their soundness and vital consequence, to be left in manuscript with my children and some of my near family relatives, yet since I have been engaged upon it I

have felt that it might be more useful should its circulation be further extended; perhaps for the very reason of its brevity.

That portion of it which treats of the Discipline, and the action of the Society under it, is given more specially and in detail than would else be needful, for the benefit of such as may chance to meet with it who have not other ready means of information respecting the Society, its principles and usages.

CHARLES PERRY.

WESTKELY, B. I., *Second Month*, 1835.

A BRIEF EXPOSITION
OF
IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF FRIENDS.

FOR a considerable time past I have felt that it might be my duty, before I go hence to be seen of men no more, to leave some record of the high estimation in which I hold the true principles of the Religious Society of Friends (commonly called Quakers), which of late years have been sadly departed from by many whose place it should have been to maintain and uphold them before the world in their purity. And now, in the seventy-fifth year of my age, for the benefit of survivors and those who may come after me, I will endeavor (however unworthy I feel myself to be rightly to perform such a task) to set forth the ground of my assured conviction of the truth and divine origin of these essential doctrines.

First, I believe that George Fox was divinely inspired to preach the gospel, and to hold forth to the world a bright example of the excellency of Christianity. His teaching differed so far, and was so much in advance, from the degenerate condition of the professing church of his day, and so clearly made manifest this difference to be of practical and essential importance, that it excited the ill-feelings and pas-

sions of many high professors, and called forth much obloquy and persecution upon George Fox and those early worthies who were convinced of the truth of his teachings, and in the honest integrity of their souls faithfully endeavored to live in accordance with them.

It is remarkable that so many of these staunch supporters of the truth were raised up to bear their testimony to its inestimable worth, and who chose rather to suffer the reproaches and persecutions of men than to give up or deny the blessed principles of the gospel of Christ, which they had espoused, and which fully corresponded with the sensible and immediate operations of the Holy Spirit upon their own hearts.

The first great principle and fundamental truth of the doctrines taught by George Fox was that the direct operation of the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed to all, as a living Guide and Teacher, to be felt and known by all those who would heed it and endeavor to follow its leadings. This doctrine is, I think, more fully and clearly testified of in the holy Scriptures than almost any other in the whole range of Christian belief. It seems most fitting that it should be so, inasmuch as it is the foundation on which all the others rest, — the root from which all the various branches abiding therein receive nourishment and strength.

Very strange does it appear that this most essential doctrine and ground-work of true vital religion, — that of *Immediate Divine Revelation*, — with such an abundance of Scripture testimony to sustain it, could have been called in question, doubted, or denied, by such as not only admit, but urge and plead for, the divine authority and binding obligation of the Scriptures. Yet so it was, and the early Friends suffered at the hand and instigation of such professors ex-

treme persecutions, imprisonments, and tortures, — some even unto death, — for the honest profession and faithful maintenance of their belief in this plain Scripture doctrine, and of being guided thereby. We of this generation, perhaps, little know or realize how much we owe to these staunch supporters of the truth for the freedom of conscience which we now enjoy. But for their faithful endurance we might even now be groping in the darkness of intolerance and superstition. Much of the progress which has been made in the world, in the prevalence of greater toleration of religious views and beliefs, — the greater freedom both intellectual and physical, — as well as many other advances of the most desirable nature, is undoubtedly to be attributed to the good influence exerted by these people, through holy help, in faithfully publishing their Christian principles, and adhering to them, through evil report and good report.

I propose to quote from the Scriptures some passages which can be no otherwise construed than as a plain and direct testimony to the truth of the great doctrine here referred to ; and then to show that other of the distinguishing principles and practices of Friends, the legitimate outgrowth and result of this leading primal truth, are also fully sustained by clear Scripture testimony.

First, in regard to the sensible operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man, enlightening his conscience, and, as it is heeded, directing his way, and leading him in the path of righteousness and safety. We find that Moses, under the dispensation to the Jews, after citing them to divers commandments besides those delivered on Mount Horeb, and setting forth the sad penalties of disobedience, promises them great good on this condition, namely : —