

**THE ORDINANCES:
AN ADDRESS TO
FRIENDS**

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The Ordinances: An Address to Friends by Helen Balkwill

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HELEN BALKWILL

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BY
HELEN BALKWILL.

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PREFACE.

"Nothing is more easy than to read Scripture with a particular doctrinal bias—to give full place in our minds to passages which fall in with that bias—to pass over other parts of *The Book* with less notice, and even to *wrest* to the support of our own particular views, texts or expressions of which the true meaning on close inspection, is found to be in an opposite direction."

The above profoundly true words were written by an eminent author in the Society of Friends, and he further asserts in reference to the same subject, that such "conventional misinterpretations of Scripture impede the free progress of truth within the borders of the Church." He also "freely acknowledges that a few examples of this kind have arisen *among us*," and expresses his conviction "that the sooner such errors are rectified, the better for the growth and prosperity of our little section of the Christian Church."

Such a conviction is so fully shared by the writer of the following pages, as to induce her to venture to set forth the grounds for views merely pronounced, yet suffered for, last year; and to entreat that in this examination of Scripture, there may be a "holy impartiality" exercised; and that Friends may always "gratefully accept the *development of truth* in all its features. Should any deem the present re-examination unimportant, let the Providential circumstances which seem to indicate this necessity be remembered; and honestly in the sight of God propound to themselves the question—whether it can be otherwise than a reasonable Christian duty to weigh impartially an appeal in behalf of true and proper liberty of conscience; made with no desire to "*undermine*," but to benefit the Church: and not only so, but under a deep sense of the prompting and leading of Him, whose blessing is devoutly craved for every reader.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH NOT A SECT.

OR, REASONS WHY FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND ACTION IN REFERENCE
TO WATER BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER SHOULD BE
ALLOWED IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

When the outward Christian Church was founded by Christ and His Apostles, it was as *a unit*. "One Fold and one Shepherd" is the grand thought that was at once, so simply and so practically set forth in its establishment; yet within the scope of this Fold there existed from the first (and from the very nature of things) a very large variation of experience, thought, and action. So far as I can see, this was the Divine Plan, and the Apostles fearlessly acted out their Lord's will (see Mark ix. 38, 39; Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Acts ii. 41-47; iv. 32; 1 Cor. i. 10); and we find neither command nor permission for the cutting up or division of the Church into various sects as found in the present day. All commands to the Church are given as to a whole, "no Scripture being of any *private* interpretation" (see 2 Pet. i. 20), and the Lord Jesus in His similes, and the Apostles in theirs, maintain the same idea. "A city"—"a net"—"a tree"—"a

field"—a "house"—a "Temple"—"one bread"—"one body!" Christ is *not* to be divided; no mere man has the right to head any Church, none but He who was crucified. Even the great Apostle of the Gentiles would not have men follow him in this sense. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul"? he asks a church in amazement; nay, but in the name of Jesus! And he rejoiced that he had not himself baptized, lest any should say he had baptized in his own name, or, in other words, drawn the attention and fealty of men from Christ to himself, thus dividing Christ. Would to God that in subsequent times this same care had been equally observed both in the Society of Friends, and in other bodies! Then the incessant appeal to human dicta would have been spared us, for verily it seems to us that not only have Christians erred by being (metaphorically) baptized in the names of Calvin and Wesley, and other divines of other churches, but in the names of Fox and Barclay also, within our own borders! Had Sects been God's *plan*, doubtless He would have established their order in founding the Christian Church, and Paul might have been at the head of one, that one which pre-eminently set forth "Justification by Faith," let us suppose; John of another, that which upheld the mystic contemplations of Love,—James of another, that which specially gloried in philanthropy and good works,—Peter of another, that which maintained a loving place for Jewish converts even when they cling to the ancient observances. Is this the pattern the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles set us? No! it is not. But how much easier that plan would have been,—then there need have been no jars, no collisions! With one

sect or society for the most spiritual members, who should all be together, another for the next stage, and so down to the "babes"; with a distinct and definite code of laws, maxims, and principles for each, and banners to be displayed in accordance, each regiment in the army might then have marched on so harmoniously! as harmoniously as in the present day, when the sects leave one another alone, and all in each regiment march in strict line with the rest. Why was not this the pattern? We can only acknowledge humbly that it *was not*. "Why," we may see, if God shews us, otherwise human reason admits itself baffled; but the facts remain indisputable.

Within this mighty pale, how then was the early Church preserved in unity? We answer, uniformity there never was, differences and difficulties there were in plenty, but *in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ there was unity*, and on Him the Church rested and was one (see Matt. xvi. 18.) This glorious Oneness is amplified in Eph. iv. 3-6, where the unity of the "one body" is shewn to consist in being born of, and we may believe to a large extent baptized with, the "one Spirit;" in its members having "one hope" of their "calling," "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and "one God and Father of all." Here I would venture the opinion that the "one baptism" referred to in this passage does not mean the Baptism of the Holy Ghost; but the one simple outward confession of faith which all Believers were required to make, and did actually make in those days. Now, if the body is *one*, the Spirit in His operations *one*, if we are saved by the *one* Lord, live in the *one* faith, have *one* Father above us all, and in some form must make the *one* public confession and profession, is there not enough cohesiveness in these