

**THE TESTIMONY OF WESTERN
YEARLY MEETING OF THE SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS, RESPECTING SOME OF
THEIR CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES
PRACTICES, 1881**

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The Testimony of Western Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, Respecting Some of Their Christian Doctrines Practices, 1881 by Various

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At the Meeting for Sufferings of Western Yearly Meeting of Friends, held at Plainfield 5th month 5th, 1881.

The following Testimony, prepared by a committee of our late Yearly Meeting, was submitted to this meeting, as directed by that meeting, which, having been deliberately read and considered, was fully united with and adopted.

Extracted from the minutes of the meeting aforesaid.

ADDISON HADLEY, *Clerk.*

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THE
TESTIMONY
OF
WESTERN YEARLY MEETING
OF THE
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

In considering the condition of the religious society of Friends, and the great unsettlement which prevails, wherein many of the doctrines and testimonies that have ever been held by us as a people, seem to be little understood, or are so loosely held as to be of little binding obligation on a large proportion of those professing our name, we have been brought under a feeling of earnest solicitude on behalf of our beloved brethren and sisters.

We feel an earnest desire that all may experience preservation from the many dangers and temptations which abound in this day of shaking and commotion, and know of being established upon the Rock Christ Jesus, who has been the unfailing refuge and support of the righteous in every generation.

It is only as we are willing to trust in living faith in the Lord Jesus and to bring our lives into conformity with his holy requiring, manifested by the Holy Spirit in our hearts, that we can detect the insidious devices which the enemy of man's happiness is ever laying for our entanglement.

We believe a loud and solemn call is extended to the members of our religious society, to come up fully in the belief and observance of those spiritual doctrines and the practices which conspicuously distinguished our predecessors, and being brought unreservedly under the government of the spirit of the Lord, the source of all saving knowledge, we may really be taught of him the things which belong to the soul's salvation.

We freely own that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that without repentance and regeneration, we must forever fall short of it. We are also sensible that upon due confession, submission and sincere obedience to the manifestations of Christ, the light of men, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 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."

The design of the following pages is to exhibit very briefly the doctrinal views of the society on some important subjects, which have of late years been brought particularly to notice. It is not intended to propagate or defend any new principles or testimonies, but rather to revive some of those that have been surely believed, taught and practiced from the rise of the society. With this in view, we have deemed it best to make this chiefly a compilation from the approved writings of early Friends, and from documents which have been approved by the society at large.

In the brief space we have allotted ourselves, we have endeavored to present the views of the several authors on the subjects alluded to, as fairly and plainly as might be, in such short extracts as we have been compelled to make.

We do most fully sanction and unite with those doctrinal writings of early Friends which have been approved by the society; among which we will mention those of George Fox, Robert Barclay, William Penn, George Whitehead, Isaac Pennington, Richard Claridge, and we might add many others. We would also call attention especially to "The testimony of the society of Friends on the continent of America," issued in 1830, and adopted by all the yearly meetings then in existence on the continent, as containing a clear statement of doctrines as ever held by the society, from which we have quoted freely.

OF THE ONE TRUE GOD AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.

"We do believe in one, only, Holy God Almighty, who is an Eternal Spirit, the Creator of all things; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, his only son, and express image of his substance, who took upon him flesh, and was in the world; and in life, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and mediation, perfectly did, and does continue to do, the will of God; to whose holy life, power, mediation, and blood, we only ascribe our sanctification, justification, redemption and perfect salvation.

"And we believe in one Holy Spirit, that proceeds and breathes from the Father and the Son, as the life and virtue of both the Father and the Son; a measure of which is given to all to profit with; and he that has one has all, for those three are one, who is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, God over all, blessed forever." (*)

In relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, and the end of that coming, He Himself declared: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (1)

The Apostle Paul, speaking on this subject, says: "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." (2)

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (3)

"We do believe that Jesus Christ was our holy sacrifice, atonement and propitiation; that he bore our iniquities, and

(*) Penn. vol. ii, pages 66, 67.

(1) Matt. xx. 28. (2) Rom. v. 8, 9, 10. (3) 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

by his stripes we are healed of the wounds Adam gave us in his fall, and that God is just in forgiving true penitents, upon the credit of that holy offering Christ made of Himself to God, for us; and that what he did and suffered satisfied and pleased God, and that through the offering up of himself, once for all, through the Eternal Spirit, he hath forever perfected those, (in all time,) that were sanctified, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." (1)

I. Pennington, in "An Epistle to all Serious Professors," &c., says, concerning the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ, without the gates of Jerusalem: (2) "I do exceedingly honor and esteem that offering, believing it had relation to the sins of the whole world, and was a propitiatory sacrifice to the Father therefor. And, surely, he that is redeemed out of the world up to God by Christ, cannot deny that Christ was his ransom and that he was bought with a price, and, therefore, is to glorify God with his body and spirit, which are God's. And saith the Apostle Peter, 'Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation,' &c., 'but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who so offered himself up to God through the eternal spirit. This we do own singly and nakedly as in the sight of the Lord, though I must confess we do not lay the sole stress upon that which is outward and visible (though we truly and fully acknowledge it in its place), but upon the inward power, the spirit within; knowing and experiencing daily that that is it which doeth the work."

"We cannot believe that Christ's death and sufferings so satisfy God or justify men as that they are *thereby* accepted of God. They are, indeed, put into a *state capable* of being accepted of God, and through the obedience of faith and sanctification of the spirit, *are* in a state of acceptance. And, though Christ did die for us, yet we must, through the aid of

(1) Wm. Penn, vol. 5, page 310. (2) Vol. 4, page 310.

His grace, work out our salvation with fear and trembling. As he died *for* sin, so we must die *to* sin, or we cannot be said to be saved by the death and sufferings of Christ." (*)

In an article "Concerning Christ's being manifested without and his being also manifested within," &c., I. Pennington says: "It is objected against us who are called Quakers, that we deny Christ, and look not to be saved by him, as he was manifested without us, but look only to be saved by a Christ in us; to which this is in my heart to answer such as singly desire satisfaction therein.

"We do indeed expect to be saved; (yea, and not only so, but do already, in our several measures, witness salvation,) by the revelation and operation of the life of Christ within us; yet not without relation to what he did without us. For all that he did in that body of flesh was of the Father, and had its place and service in the will and according to the counsel of the Father. But the knowledge and belief of that, since the days of the apostles, hath been very much held in the unrighteousness and in the separation from the inward work of the power and life of Christ in the heart; which, as so held, can not save any. But whoever feels the light and life of Christ revealed in him, and comes into union with God there-through, he feels the work of regeneration, of sanctification, of justification, of life and redemption, and so comes to reap benefit inwardly, and to partake of the blessed fruits of all that Christ did outwardly; yea, he that is thus one with Christ in the spirit cannot exclude himself, nor is excluded by God from the advantage of anything nor everything Christ did in that body of flesh." (f)

DIVINE REVELATION.

The society of Friends has always believed in the doctrine of immediate Divine Revelation, and that this belief is fully

(*) Wm. Penn, vol. 5, p. 320.

(f) Vol. 2, p. 553.