

**AN EPISTLE OF AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND
COUNSEL, ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS BY
THE YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS, HELD IN
PHILADELPHIA, BY ADJOURNMENTS, FROM
THE 18TH TO THE 22ND FROM 18TH OF THE
FOURTH MONTH, 1883**

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An Epistle of Affectionate Caution and Counsel, Addressed to Its Members by the Yearly Meeting Of Friends, Held In Philadelphia, by adjournments, from the 18th to the 22nd from 18th of the fourth month, 1883 by Various

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AN EPISTLE

OF

AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL,

ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS

BY THE

YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,

HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,

BY ADJOURNMENTS, FROM THE 18TH TO THE 22ND OF THE
FOURTH MONTH, 1853;

AND PUBLISHED BY ITS DIRECTION.

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At a Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia, by adjournments, from the 18th of the Fourth month, to the 22nd of the same, inclusive, 1853:—

The Meeting for Sufferings having been drawn, under religious concern for the welfare of our members, to prepare an Epistle of Caution and Counsel on various important subjects relating to the support of our principles and testimonies in life and conversation, it was deliberately read and considered; and much unity with it being felt and expressed, the Epistle was adopted by the meeting, and the clerk directed to sign it on our behalf. It is our affectionate desire that all may apply to themselves individually the salutary counsel it conveys, and be afresh incited to diligence and faithfulness in fulfilling their religious duties.

The Meeting for Sufferings is directed to have printed at least a sufficient number to supply our members; and the subordinate meetings are desired to give the necessary attention to the distribution within their respective limits.

Extracted from the minutes,

WILLIAM EVANS,

Clerk to the meeting this year.

AN EPISTLE

OR

AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL,

&c. &c.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Our minds being drawn at this time into a consideration of the temptations and trials by which our unwearied adversary is striving to alienate the members of our Religious Society from a faithful, upright walking in the Truth, and to beguile the young people into the corruptions that abound in the world, we feel engaged to address you in the love of the gospel, in order to stir up the pure mind by way of remembrance of the many obligations we owe to our Heavenly Father, and to encourage you to increasing dedication and faithfulness in the support of the Christian testimonies we are called to bear.

It is now about two hundred years since the first Friends began to publish, in their primitive clearness and force, the blessed doctrines of the Lord Jesus and his apostles. Having been brought themselves to

know by experience, that nothing but his power, who is the resurrection and the life, can quicken the soul that is dead in trespasses and sin, give it a true sense of its lost condition, and as it yields to the workings of the grace of God, "deliver it from the power of darkness, and translate it into the kingdom of his dear Son;" they called upon men with divine authority to receive and obey the light wherewith Christ Jesus has enlightened them, by which, in the obedience of faith, he would give them the victory over the world, the flesh and the devil.

In yielding to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, many felt a true hunger and thirst after righteousness, and were led, in the silence of all flesh, to wait upon the Lord for the further unfoldings of his will, and to be fed with the living bread that comes down from Him, by which their souls were nourished and kept alive unto God. Herein they experienced the communion of the Holy Ghost, the participation of the body and blood of Christ, and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Son of God, they were made living witnesses of his power and coming in their hearts, and received from Him, who alone is the author of it, saving faith in Himself and in the manifestations of his Spirit in them, and also became true believers in all the doctrines of the gospel as laid down in the Holy Scriptures.

Under the discipline of the cross of Christ, which crucified them to the world and the world to them,

Friends saw that the gospel is a dispensation of divine life and power, revealed for the regeneration and sanctification of the soul, in which mere ceremonial performances have no place, but the way is opened "into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh." Thus they were prepared to worship God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh; and to receive from him clear views of the nature of his government in his church, and in every individual member of it.

We have always believed that the worship of God is inward and spiritual, daily experienced in the heart of every true believer; and that it is also our duty to assemble at particular times for the performance of it, as a public acknowledgment of the gratitude and homage we owe to our Heavenly Father for his abundant mercies and gifts bestowed upon us, and to unite in a harmonious travail of spirit before him for the renewal of our strength, and according to his will, to exercise the gifts of ministry, prayer and praise for the edification of one another, and the glory of his great name. These gifts we believe are only dispensed by Him who ascended up on high, and who still condescends, in his goodness and love, to give them to those whom he has prepared by the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire to receive them, and they are to be occupied under his immediate putting forth, in the work unto which he calls. When thus occupied, the

ministry and vocal prayers of such will be a savour of life, and in a greater or less degree will baptize into the Holy Spirit, to the refreshing of the living members, and at times to the awakening of some who are in a state of forgetfulness of God.

The true and acceptable worship of Almighty God, and a pure gospel ministry, are duties and services of unspeakable importance to the welfare and preservation of our Religious Society in the life and power, and practice of godliness. We have been brought to feel deeply under the fear that through the enervating influences of the spirit of the world, the zeal of many has grown cold, and their practice dwindled into little more than the form of going to their meetings once a week, in others not so often, while some almost totally neglect them. In relation to the ministry, the ranks of this class have become thin, but few coming forth in that weighty work; may we not fear from the minds of so great a proportion of the members, being immersed in their temporal concerns, or captivated by the love of ease, and taking their delight in sensual gratification.

If all our members were concerned for their own salvation, so that it was the object of their first and most earnest pursuit, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we believe they could not be easy to stay away from their religious meetings, but would feel constrained to endeavour to surmount all obstacles, in order to present themselves with their brethren and

sisters, for the performance of this solemn duty. We think there cannot be found among us a truly awakened individual, who, if able, is not impelled from a sense of religious duty to attend our meetings for divine worship, and that wherever there is a wilful neglect of them, it is an evidence that such have gone from the Truth, and are in bondage to the hard taskmaster, who is leading them further and further into insensibility of heart, which if not arrested, must terminate in spiritual blindness, and the utter forsaking of the living God.

In this day of outward prosperity the way is opened for many to indulge themselves and their children in luxury and grandeur, by which they are led into association with those who disregard the duty of self-denial. Thus, the company of faithful consistent Friends, and the attendance of our meetings for worship, which are often held in silence, become irksome to them, and they are liable to be caught with a showy ceremonial worship and a popular hired ministry, which our predecessors in the Truth rejected, and against which, through great sufferings, they bore a faithful Christian testimony. It is mournful to see any forsaking the faith and the worship of our forefathers, and we are persuaded that they suffer a loss which no worldly consideration can compensate or repair, and that a heavy accountability will attach to parents, who, by their wrong indulgence, lay the foundation for the departure of the young people into the ways and customs of the world. If parents pursue a