

**DRESS AND WORLDLY  
COMPLIANCE, ADDRESSED  
TO THE MEMBERS OF  
THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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Dress and Worldly Compliance, Addressed to the Members of the Society of Friends by Joseph Pike

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**JOSEPH PIKE**

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1872.

THE succeeding pages upon the subject of Dress and Worldly Compliance, have been compiled under an apprehension that the present may be a suitable time for reviving in the minds of all who bear the name of Friends, this important testimony, which the Society from its rise until the present time has been called upon to maintain before the world, and which without doubt, will continue to be a testimony to be borne while the Society shall have existence as a distinct branch of the Church universal.



## DRESS.

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THE following selections, from the writings of Joseph Pike, are taken from the second volume of Friends' Library. Although the period at which they were written was near the beginning of the last century, and early in the history of the Society, it would appear that some of the members had then in measure fallen into a state of ease and a luxurious mode of living, accompanied by a degree of conformity to the world, with respect to attire and the furnishing of their houses. The remarks and observations seem well calculated to engage the attention of the serious and thoughtful of that period, and they are also deemed singularly appropriate to the present occasion.

The selections are reluctantly curtailed, to confine them to the subject more particularly under consideration; but the reader is affectionately invited to peruse the whole of these writings, being weighty and instructive, and very interesting as a clear and liberal exposition of the Christian testimonies, and the beautiful order and gospel harmonies of the organization of the religious Society of Friends.

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And if any should think, that we placed religion

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barely in outward conformity and plainness, such are greatly mistaken; so far from it, that if we should outwardly conform in every thing, in which the Holy Scriptures direct us unto, or that godly elders are moved of the Lord to advise; yet, if our hearts are not right in His sight, and we do not witness a growth in His holy Truth, all the external conformity and plainness in the world, though good in itself, will avail us nothing as to Divine acceptance; no more than as the apostle tells the believers, that if he gave his body to be burned, or his goods to the poor, &c., yet, if he wanted charity, (which is the love of God,) all would profit him nothing, and he would be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Cor. 13.

However, notwithstanding religion does not consist in bodily conformity, or plainness of apparel, but is in and from the heart, as also on the other hand, pride is in the heart, and not in the outward clothing, yet true religion leads into simplicity in all outward things. For though there is a form of godliness without the power, yet the power of Truth leads into a godly form and order in outward things; and this is abundantly proved from the Holy Scriptures, and among the rest, even in outward clothing. Thus, did true religion in the heart lead our first elders and fathers in the church, out of the fashions, customs, finery, and superfluity of apparel, and furniture, and to testify against it, as not proceeding from the Spirit of Truth, but from the vain, unsettled spirit of this world, as it most certainly does. But some cavillers have thus argued, "Where is the standard of plainness and simplicity in apparel, furniture, &c., by which we are to square ourselves, or who are

the proper judges to whom we should submit ourselves? How many buttons are we to wear, more or less, on our coats; what exact fashion in length and breadth are the parts of our clothes to be of; how high are our hats to be, or how broad the brims? And do not you, who press upon us this great plainness, differ among yourselves in your practice? And are not some things you wear, when strictly examined, not needful? After all, we are each best judges for ourselves; we will see for ourselves, and do as we list, and not be imposed upon by your injunctions." These were the arguments used, to my certain knowledge, by the old separatists, who in these and various other respects, strongly pleaded for what they called their Christian liberty; but at last they dwindled away, and came to nothing. And some from the very same spirit use the same language now.

As to the standard and judge they demand, I answer, the Spirit of Truth is sufficient to guide in these and all other things. Thus the apostles from the Spirit of Truth advised the believers not to be conformed to this world, not to fashion themselves according to their former lusts, not to adorn themselves with outward adorning, costly array, &c. And thus the same Spirit led our first elders and worthies to keep to plainness, and to testify against running into and following after the customs, fashions, and finery of this world. As to that frivolous objection, that plain Friends do not all go exactly alike in these respects, they never desired nor pressed a precise conformity in every trivial thing, provided there was a care and tenderness preserved to keep from edging towards, or copying vain and foolish fash-

ions; and if the objectors differed only from plainness, so far as plain Friends differ from each other, and kept within the bounds of true moderation, no fault would be found with them. With regard to the question, Who shall judge or decide such things? Certainly not those who gratify a high, vain spirit, in using such things as grieve faithful Friends, and who have themselves known but little of the work of Truth upon their hearts. The most proper outward judges in these things are rather such as are spiritual men, whose eyes are single to the Lord, and whose bodies, as saith Christ, are full of light; these, as the apostle writes, judge all things, but themselves are judged of no man, that is, of no carnal man. Such are good examples to the flock of God, and having nothing in view but his honor and the good of souls, may be safely followed, and we are bound to submit ourselves to them. As to these objectors not seeing evil in these things, or being convinced of this or that, it may be said of them, "They seeing, see not, neither do they understand;" and it will be long ere they, while they continue in this state and spirit, can rightly see the things that belong to their peace and safety and growth; and it is preposterous in them to pretend matter of conscience to wear and use gay clothing, &c.

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These things and much more, relating to conversation and behaviour, and using the things of the world, the apostles, in their several epistles, gave forth by the movings of the Holy Spirit to the churches. And we find, they mentioned superfluous things, that were worn and used in their days, which will comprehend those