

**THE GROUND OF CHRISTIAN
DISCIPLINE BRIEFLY EXPLAINED; AND
THE NECESSITY OF THE INFLUENCE
OF HEAVENLY WISDOM FOR ITS
PROPER SUPPORT, ENFORCED**

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The Ground of Christian Discipline Briefly Explained; and the Necessity of the Influence of heavenly wisdom for its proper support, enforced by Joseph Tatham

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JOSEPH TATHAM

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Duplicate

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WITHOUT ME, YE CAN DO NOTHING.—*John xv. 5.*
Not as though I had already attained, either were already
perfect.—*Phil. iii. 12.*

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TO FRIENDS IN THEIR SEVERAL QUARTERLY
AND MONTHLY MEETINGS.

DEAR FRIENDS,

In a degree of that love which is the ground and cement of true religious fellowship, and in a belief that the present state of our Society, may derive advantage from a close examination of the fundamental principle of Christian Discipline, I submit to your consideration the following remarks, with sincere desires that they may obtain, on your part, that attention which is proportioned to the importance of the subject.

The weighty duties which belong to Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, have, for some years, been the frequent subject of my reflections, and a desire has been excited in me, not to hold back any thing that may contribute, in however small a degree, to promote the general good of the body.

To Monthly Meetings is assigned the executive department of our Discipline—a momentous trust! the very existence of our Society in a state of respectability and efficiency, depending almost entirely on the right conducting of these Meet-

ings; whilst upon Quarterly Meetings devolves a highly responsible superintendence of all the Monthly Meetings which constitute them. Of what importance then is it, that in these Meetings, the principle of Christian Discipline should be well understood, and closely adhered to! I mean, not a mere adherence to the letter of outward rules, good in themselves, but a dwelling with and under the influence of that Divine power, which ought to be the crown of our assemblies. To these Meetings, then, thus united, we may look for the support of that Discipline, which in Divine wisdom has been established amongst us; and which, if rightly maintained, would very much conduce to preserve the body upon the one sure foundation, perhaps even more than any other circumstance. This foundation standeth sure. It is no other than the immutable Rock of Ages—Christ Jesus in his spiritual appearance—the revelation of his Name or Power in and amongst us, individually and collectively.

To this Name, which, under every dispensation, has been the sure refuge of the righteous, and which still continues to be their only preservation, I very tenderly and affectionately recommend you, and am

Your friend and brother,

JOSEPH TATHAM.

LEEDS,
Camp-Lane Court,
10th Mo. 1824.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Such is the propensity of human nature to deviate from a right course, that, without a frequent recurrence to first principles, there is a danger of Societies, as well as individuals, losing their settlement on the foundation upon which they were originally established. From this consideration, the Author of the following remarks has been led to entertain a fear, lest the disposition prevalent in many persons to attempt to set aside the necessity of Divine assistance in conducting the Discipline of the Church, should increase, and eventually lead us, as a Society, from the true foundation of our religious profession. This has induced him to endeavour, in the spirit of love, to convince the judgments of those who may entertain this sentiment, and thereby to check, if possible, this evil;—an evil which appears to him to savour much of presumption—to be highly offensive to the *Divine Being*—and likely to draw down his displeasure on our favoured Society.

As these remarks are designed only for the members of our own Society, it may seem the less necessary to observe, that the Author by no means wishes to depreciate human abilities, either natural or acquired. These are highly valuable in their places, and may be eminently useful in the Church, in various degrees, when they are sanctified by Divine Grace, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. All that he insists upon, is, that unless they are thus sanctified, and act in subservience to this Spirit, it cannot be expected that they will avail towards promoting the kingdom of God.

This kingdom, we are assured, is *within*—of a spiritual nature—and consists in “righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost;” Rom. xiv. 17. a state of mind in which the Spirit of Christ rules and reigns. If the establishment of this kingdom in the heart, is essentially requisite for all, in order that the great purpose of their being may be accomplished, how peculiarly so must it be for those who undertake to build up the Church of God, and thereby to promote the establishment of his kingdom in the hearts of others!

Many amongst us, it is to be feared, are lamentably insensible of their insufficiency of themselves for this work; and therefore they feel not the necessity of waiting for the influence of that power which alone can qualify them for such service. It was this power, however, which wrought so effectually in many of our predecessors, and strengthened them to bear such a fight of afflictions, and to contend so valiantly “for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Jude i. 3.

The object of the present little work, is by no means to discourage any friends from attending meetings for Discipline, but the contrary. And as the right support of these meetings, and the part we take in them, are matters of great importance to ourselves and to the Society, the Author is solicitous to put Friends upon a careful examination how far they are active in them, so as to promote their own best interests, and the interest of the cause they profess to serve. For want of attending to the important business of Meetings for Discipline in a proper spirit, and with a suitable preparation of heart, many, it is to be feared, really injure themselves, and the cause they are desirous to forward. The design of the following observations, is, if possible, to prevent so unhappy an effect; and if they shall conduce, in any degree, to this salutary purpose, the Author will think himself amply repaid for his labour.

THE GROUND, &c.

“God is a Spirit:” John iv. 24. and communion with Him can be enjoyed only through a spiritual medium. For this purpose, in the riches of his goodness towards poor fallen man, He has furnished every individual with a measure of his own pure Spirit;—that “unspeakable gift,” 2 Cor. ix. 15. purchased for us by the sufferings and death of his beloved Son. Through the enlightening, purifying efficacy of this Divine Principle of Life, man is mercifully put into a capacity to see and feel his lost condition by nature, and to regain that purity and holiness, from which by disobedience our first parents fell. For this Spirit, as it is cordially united with, qualifies him to contend successfully with the principle of evil in his own heart, and eventually enables him to be more than conqueror. The strong man armed that had occupied the house, is cast out, and his goods are spoiled: a complete change takes place in his heart; the affections are transferred from earth to heaven; and the pure Seed of the kingdom, before oppressed and