To Rachel and Mary Stacey.

On board the "Henry Fleeing;"
Sydney Cove, New South Wales.
9/2 Mo: 1835.

My dear friends
R. & M. Stacey.

Your kind joint letter of the 23rd of 6th Mo.
1835 duly reached me a few days only before the departure of my
Companion, J. Backhouse, and myself, from V. D. Land; and as
some of the subjects adverted to are of rather peculiar character
and interest I feel unwilling to defcr some brief notice of its
contents until a later period. In connection especially with the
progress of our friend Daniel Wheeler's mission, it becomes in
my estimation obligatory on those who have been associated with
him and his Companion for some months, candidly to state the
impressions that have been excited; because they may have in
degree the effect of allaying those fears which have unhappily been
excited in some minds with regard to the propriety of these dear
friends' movements.

The arrival of D. Wheelerand his Son, just before the general
conference that took place among those professing with Friends in 
V. D. Land, was in itself a coincidence hardly less striking than it 
proved helpful and consolatory. The series of peculiar events that 
transpired after the departure of the 'Henry Freeling' from London, by 
which our friends were detained so many months in the Channel, 
had the obvious effect of compelling them to make the voyage by 
c way of the Cape of Good Hope, instead of Cape Horn, the most di-
rect route to Tahiti, the central point, as it may be called, of our 
friends intended labours. Thus they and we have been brought into 
unexpected association and co-operation, in a way that has tended to 
induce the belief that our respective movements have indeed been 
ordered by a guidance and wisdom higher than our own.

It has also been a source of comfort to many of those whose minds have 
been brought under conviction, and who by open profession have de-
clared their attachment to the principles of the Gospel as maintained 
by Friends, to participate in the labours of our valued friend D.W. 

It has been confirming to them to hear, through a different medium, 
the same great truths inculcated as those they had previously heard 
pronounced through the instrumentality chiefly of my dear companion 
J. Backhouse: and it has been stimulating to their faith to observe 
the gracious dealings of the great Head of the Church, who has thus 
directed the footsteps of his servants to that particular portion of his fold
of which we trust they form an integral part, thereby affording an encouraging proof that they are indeed the objects of his merciful care and regard. To my own mind the presence of our friends has been cause of real satisfaction and comfort, for which I desire to be reverently grateful to Him who turned their steps hither. There are two individuals with whom I am acquainted who have to date their first serious impressions of a permanent character from D.W.'s ministerial labors; and I doubt not many others have been strengthened and measurably built up in the faith through the same instrumentality. In regard to doctrine, I have heard nothing fall from the lips of D.W. but what I believe to be in strict accordance with the Gospel of Christ as unfolded in the Scriptures. Christ, as the propitiation for our sins, the alone Way to the Father, made known through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, are doctrines prominently exhibited in his communications from one season to another; and though there may be diversity of illustration and expression, for the Lord's gifts are variously modified by the peculiar mental constitution and educational advantages of the receivers, it is satisfactory to be able to remark, that entire harmony has characterized our joint proceedings, whether in vocal labour or otherwise; the unity of the Spirit being maintained in the bond of peace.

There is a great deal also to value in Charles Wheeler. I have reason to believe that his conduct is regulated by deep-rooted Christian
principle. And, with more than usual powers of discrimination for so young a Christian, he combines a characteristic prudence, that under the regulation of principle keeps him from giving undue expression to his estimate of human character and affairs, which he is well-qualified to appreciate, qualifying him to act the part of an accurate observer and faithful narrator of every thing that may be of importance connected with their travels. I regard him as a very suitable person to be associated with his father, and have been both pleased and instructed by his acquaintance.

We are about to proceed with D. He. Wheeler as far as Norfolk Island (the principal Penal Settlement of New South Wales) from whence they proceed without delay to Tahiti direct; while we, after spending some weeks at the Settlement, return in a Government vessel to Sydney. In the prospect of speedily parting from these, our endeared friends, in the feeling of Christian fellowship, I can sincerely bid them 'God speed'!

The excitement that prevails in our religious Society, to which you have alluded, if it tend to stimulate those who have hitherto been members only by birthright instead of conviction, to try the foundation of their faith, and hopes, and to examine into the validity of the principles they have professed so as to make them truly their own; such species of excitement would be cause for rejoicing rather than regret.
There is great need however for caution, that, while following the Apostolic injunction to 'prove all things,' we also resolutely hold fast that which is good. Friends' principles are the last that will suffer by a rigid scrutiny, if the heart be but solicitous in the matter, and be divested of prejudice and double-mindedness. But if the examination be entered upon in the spirit of criticism, and as an exercise of the head rather than of the heart, or, than from deep-rooted conviction of the importance of the subjects at issue; then it is not improbable that a wider path will be found: a faith that involves life of the cross will be embraced—a faith, if such it can be called, that allows more liberty to the unsanctified zeal and energies of an unregenerate nature, but which flinches from the self-denying principles of the Gospel in their purity and simplicity.

Yet to whom shall we go? To the lo-here's! or lo-there's! that invite our attention by their clamour, or that continually surround us? Christ only has the words of eternal life: and his kingdom is within us, if we have any inheritance therein. Those who have known his voice will turn a deaf ear to the voice of the stranger, who seeketh but to kill and to devour, however specious the form he may assume. Christ's sheep hear his voice: he leadeth them out and goeth before them; and they follow him, for they know his voice; but a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. Thus it is that the sheep are saved; I go in and out, and find pasture.
Earnestly do I desire for our members, and for myself, that nothing may turn us aside from simple attention to the leadings of the true Shepherd, whose will being rightly interpreted and obeyed, we shall know from conviction of the heart and understanding the doctrine that is of God.

No outings into the region of speculation, nor zeal in support of any prominent doctrine of Christianity, however sound, however essential in itself to salvation, will make up for departure from the faith, even that Word of faith nigh in the heart and in the mouth that we may do it. If we suffer our minds to be diverted from the root and spring of religion in our own hearts, and listen to the counsels of fallible men, there is a danger of coming under the curse pronounced on such as trust in the arm of flesh, that they shall not know when good cometh, but shall be like the heath of the desert, that knoweth not when good cometh. Wanting both endurance and fruit, I feel much for those among our members who have been thrown in the way of the priests of other denominations, whilst their association with Friends has been more among the nominal than living members. The practice of the latter will not bear comparison with the former; and therefore the contrast will be likely to give rise to a prepossession in favour of these, even in the minds of the sincere-hearted, especially where there is much display of zeal, and an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the theoretical part of Christianity, which is often the case with persons of the description alluded to. No wonder that the
way of Truth should then be thought lightly of, especially if the parties so circumstanced be themselves only just awakened to the importance of Divine things, and be but little acquainted with its power. The formal Quaker will ever be the greatest stumbling-block to such, and often has the consciousness of this fact made me feel my own responsibility lest I should be one to stand in the way of an enquiring Brother.

I may observe however on this subject, that so far as my observation has extended, where our members are consistent with their profession, where there is a persevering and simple obedience to the Spirit of Truth, which leadeth into all truth, none so truly adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, none so literally tread in the steps of their Divine Master. Those shew in their lives that they practically feel the force of the Apostles declaration; 'Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits which are his.' There are many degrees of advancement towards the perfection of the Christian character, which may be regarded as complete when the spirit of the preceding injunction is practically fulfilled, and amongst the many who fall short, one of the consequences (it may operate indeed in the way either of cause or effect) of their deficiencies may have been, a want of clear understanding of the doctrine of the atonement, in all its important bearings. The doctrine of the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit, having been for so long a period almost
exclusively advocated by our Society, acquired a degree of prominence in all their writings and sermons that would not have been so conspicuous but for the defective views of the Christian world generally on this subject. Practically I fear they are generally defective still. But this peculiarity of position in which Friends have been placed has, I believe, in some instances (though I have reason to think but few) occasioned some worthy Friends to introduce the great doctrine of the atonement less than it ought in their public ministrations. Still it has always been inferred, and tacitly admitted, or taken for granted, as an unquestionable truth laying at the foundation of all Christian doctrine. Their error, if such it can be termed, said, I apprehend in too readily taking it for granted that the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was not called in question. When Friends first became a distinct people, there was a general acknowledgment of the doctrine, therefore it was not found necessary to be constantly insisting upon it, though it was ever included in their summary of Christian belief, as is sufficiently evident from the writings of our early members. And numerous are the instances among our Ministers of the present day in which this doctrine is both clear to their understanding, and is upheld and maintained with due prominence in their ministry. I believe this to be true with respect to the majority. And surely we ought to make some allowances for those who have acknowledged it in their hearts, but whose understandings have not been so fully illumine-
nated as to have given it all the place they might have done in their ministrations. The discussions that have been excited, and the comparison to which our principles have latterly been subjected with those of other denominations, have probably tended to correct this approximation to an error, and in this respect one section of the Christian Church is made helpful to another, and it is cause for thankfulness that such should be the case. It must not however be inferred from these admissions that I allow for a moment that the Society has ever been unsound in faith upon the Atonement, such would not be possible, and the members be preserved living branches of the true Vine. I am of opinion, merely, that good may have resulted from the attention of some, whose views were perhaps not very clear, having been turned to the importance of both a practical and theoretical recurrence to this doctrine, than they had been in the habit of doing. But sad, indeed, would be the result if Friends were to be shaken from their ancient foundation, which I believe has ever been, Christ Jesus, the Rock of ages; by a practical adherence to his commandments revealed in the secret of their own hearts, as well as to those enforced by the precepts of Scripture. They have proved that his commandments are life everlasting; that his words are spirit and life; that He only has the words of eternal life; and that in keeping of them there is great reward. And whatever may be, or may
have been their defects as a people. I believe it remains to be their privilege, their exceedingly great privilege, to uphold the purest standard of Christian faith and practice that has, of latter ages, been unfurled to the world by any body of Christians, and to know the blessings consequent on having Christ for their Captain, their Leader, and Guide—yee, to know the shout of a King to be amongst them!

I have been so accustomed to pay deference to the judgment and more extended information of my talented friends Rachel and Mary Stacey, that it is with some diffidence I venture to express a sentiment in opposition to theirs. And I hardly know how to account for it, that in their own interesting letter, on doctrinal subjects there is nothing that I recollect to which I cannot respond from my heart, while in forming an estimate of the merits of John Wilber's Letters we should have arrived at such opposite conclusions. I have read that work a second, and a third time. I have also read the criticisms with which my kind friends have furnished me; and I feel I should be wanting in candour to them, and should be untrue to myself, were I to shrink from the honest avowal, that I am only the more confirmed in the opinion I had formed of the intrinsic worth of those letters. The objections urged against them appear to me in general so trivial, or so inde of the mark, that
I am the more ready to regard the Letters as incontrovertible, from the little that can, with reason, be brought forward to invalidate them. There are a few expressions that are open to grammatical criticism, and in this respect they are not faultless, yet the substance and spirit of them my heart cordially unites with. I would make however one or two reservations, and in doing so, I will take the liberty of making one or two comments on the sentiments expressed by the writer of ‘the Notes’. Not knowing who the Author is I may be allowed to do so with the more unreserved freedom. Yet I must necessarily be brief, as my letter is already in danger of having become tedious.

And first, I may observe, that I concur with the Writer of ‘the Notes’ in supposing, that the ideas expressed by John Wilbur in the commencement of the 2nd Letter (see page 5) regarding “the expulsion from the regions of light” of the Arch-enemy and his band, are taken from works of imagination rather than from the Scriptures of Truth.” It is due, however, to J. Wilbur, to bear in mind, that he does not dogmatically assert their truth; for, he begins the paragraph with an “if,” which evidently implies doubt. And we ought to distinguish between an erroneous, dogmatic assertion, and a mere speculation, diffidently advanced (or rather recognized as probable, the idea having originated with others) on a
subject not very clearly revealed in the Scriptures, and the know-
ledge of which is confessedly not essential to salvation. The one
should be regarded with much more lenity, though it be erroneous,
than the other. Nor does the expression of this sentiment
in any way invalidate the general argument.

The passage in page 11, (that has drawn forth so severe a
comment from the Author of the Notes) including the words,
"Christ may have died a thousand times," is loosely worded;
but I am bound, in candour to the writer of the Letters to believe,
that what he there intended to convey is simply this: That in
the end, the virtue of Christ's death might have been applied
to the soul a thousand times (if we by his judgments had been so
many times brought to repentance) and we still have been growing
worse and worse, ye. that is, by becoming, through persevering dis-
obedience, eventually hardened, though there might have been the
transient
exercise of repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus
Christ, succeeding every repetition of sin, for a thousand times: a doc-
trine, in my view, quite in accordance with the Scriptures. The apo-
dle Paul says, "though there may be faith to remove mountains, yet
if there be not charity it is nothing - it profiteth nothing, and this
charity is defined by the Apostle John to be, 'Keeping the command-
ments of God.' "This is love, that we walk after his commandments."
Our holy Redeemer, himself, has expressed the same doctrine:
"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." See James 1:25, 17. I regard J. Wilbur's remarks as little else than a paraphrase on the Apostolic doctrine, that "faith without works is dead, being alone.; or, according to another eminent Apostle, that there must be, "sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," to render us "the called according to the Lord's purpose," that is, the chosen, "the elect of the Father."

In "the Notes," objections are made against the seven conditions which J. Wilbur asserts, are indispensable parts of the summary of Christian faith. Yet I cannot see what reason there is for objecting to a mode of illustrating the truth which has the authority of Christ and his Apostles; these deductions being made from their own words, and in several instances being couched nearly in the terms of Scripture. Can the negativeness be affirmed of any of these effects enumerated as the consequence of a cordial reception of the Gospel? If it cannot, by those who hold the Scriptures in their hands, why object to the enumeration of them, when they furnish so many subordinate texts by which we may try the genuineness of our faith.

The passage which appeared to me the most decidedly
objectionable in these criticisms, and which, if received in its full
import strikes at the very root of Christianity, is that wherein it
is asserted, that “We are nowhere promised internal light and
grace as a touchstone.” “Fanatics and antinomian painters
in different ages of the world have professed to receive such phe-
nary guidance,” etc. If such sentiments as these obtain a place
among our members, I shall not be surprised to hear that many
are seeking for comfort in outward ordinances, and are looking
towards union with those who heap to themselves teachers having
itching ears, turning away from the truth and being turned unto
fables. These are surely not sentiments which my friends R.F.M.
Stacey will vindicate. Need I refer them to the words of our holy
Redeemer for a thorough refutation of the doctrine that, “we are
nowhere promised internal light and grace as a touchstone?”
They are these: “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, nei-
ther cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved.
But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may
be made manifest that they are wrought in God.” What is this
light here referred to? No one surely will assert that this refers to
the Scriptures, but to Him in whom was life, and the life was the
Light of men: yea, and continues to be the light of men, otherwise,
how is He with his disciples to the end of the world? What is this
light but a touchstone, (the precise word I admit, is not in the Scripture, but is it not a term synonymous with the meaning here conveyed?) by which we are to try our deeds? Is not this the true Light that enlightens every man that cometh into the world? To as many as follow Him, He gives the light of life; He gives them power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. And belief in the death and sacrifice of our Blessed Redeemer will not suffice for our salvation unless we acknowledge that He is come a Light into the world that whoever believes in Him should not abide in darkness. Then we truly confess, by our obedience to the discoveries of this Light, that we are believers in Him. If we despise, or deny the sufficiency of this Light, shall we not be rejecting the counsel of Christ, who said, "Walk while ye have the light lest darkness come upon you." "While ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." If darkness come upon us, what will it then avail us to search the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have eternal life, whilst refusing to come unto Christ that we might have life? It is He who hath the key of Daniel, and who must anoint our eyes with His heavenlyunction, so as to enable us to see the things that belong to salvation, and who is worthy to open the seals of the book, to unfold to us the Scriptures, which otherwise are as a sealed book to our understandings. "If we walk in the
Light as God is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Unless we come to the Light of Christ in our hearts, even as to a touch-stone, whereby it may be made manifest, yea or nay, whether our deeds are wrought in God, how are we to determine in numberless cases, wherein the Scriptures are wholly inadequate for the purpose, were we to search them from Genesis to Revelation? How, for instance, am I to know that it is my duty to go out to a foreign land and be associated with another in labouring to spread the Gospel? Certainly the Scriptures did not inform me. But, with thankful and yea, humble gratitude, I would acknowledge, they point to that Light, even the Light of Christ, which is sufficient to make the matter clear to my understanding, and which, as my attention was turned to it, did direct me in the path of individual duty, unless I have deceived myself in supposing so. It was to me, then, a test, or touchstone, or guidance; or it was the Grace of God teaching me not only to deny ungodliness, to cease to do evil, but to learn to do well, by doing in effect. This is the way, walk in it.

If the Writer of the Notes be a Friend, I should suppose that zeal against the use of a Word, certainly not Scriptural, but exceedingly synonymous with the plain declarations of Scripture, has induced comments that are eminently calculated to mislead the
sensory. When we consider that it is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of Christ, by whose light, life, and power (which are all Scriptural terms, and denote the living virtue and efficacy of the Divine Anointing) that we are to be led into all truth; this doctrine held forth, that it is only Fanatics and antinomian Panters who profess to receive such plenary guidance, appears to me a dangerous and anti-scriptural doctrines indeed.

The Scriptures, also, are a test of the soundness of Christian faith and practice; and no true Friend will object to have either his profession or practice subjected to such a touchstone. Yet there must be a higher standard or test whereby to try doctrines and conduct. Doctrines may be preached that are perfectly sound and Scriptural, yet the life may be wanting; and how are the hearers to determine this but by that inward sense and feeling which is the experience of the spiritually-minded, whose minds are turned to the light of Christ in their own hearts. He that is spiritual, saith an Apostle, judgeth all things, though he himself is judged of no man.” Like the same apostle, such an one knows, “not the speech, only of those who minister, but the power: for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” One can the judgment of the spiritually-minded, if due attention be paid to the Monitors of their heavenly Monitor, even contradict the Scriptures, or be at-
variances with their decisions, so far as their precepts can be applied as a touchstone to doctrines or conduct, for the Lord is known to be "a Spirit of judgment to them that set in judgment," as well as "strengths to them that turn the battle to the gate."

There are many remarks which suggested themselves to my mind as I read the "Notes," that had the effect of deviating them in my estimation of any force in invalidating the spirit and tenor of J. Wilbur's excellent comments. I would not however contend for every word he has used, some as I have before observed, not being the best chosen. But the production, as a whole, appears to me to be a real benefit to our Community; and I cannot but believe has been in great measure the dictates of that Spirit which guideth into all truth; with the merciful design of augmenting the bulwarks of the Society against innovation and error. I have not time, nor is it necessary, to enlarge further; nor can I be critically just in the comments I have ventured to offer. I believe my dear friend, will not be disposed to make me an offender for a word; and in regard to the spirit of them I hope not to be misunderstood. In any respect I have come in collision with their individual sentiments, I trust they will excuse me, I believe, that I have expressed what I have from a regard to what I believe to be the truth. Ye. ye. ye.

At 9. In transcribing the rough draft, of which the above is a literal copy, many additions and emendations occurred to me, of which I now have occasion to regret I did not retain the transcript. The above however forms the substance of the communication.