

To William Holdship.

Sydney, New S. Wales. 28<sup>th</sup> Mo. 1835.

My dear friend

William Holdship.

Since I heard of thy having withdrawn from the Meetings of Friends, & also of the manner in which thou hast closed thy doors against them, I have felt a frequent concern on my mind on thy account, believing that thou hast missed thy way in the matter however upright thy intentions may have been. Yet I forbore writing to thee, knowing that others had communicated with thee <sup>on thy</sup> subject, both verbally & by letter, lest I should multiply words, possibly without wisdom, and not really tend to rectify the misunderstanding that has arisen.

My dear Companion, James Backhouse, having however just shewn me his letter to thee on the subject, containing remarks in which I cordially concur, & which as thou weighest them in the light of Truth I trust will sufficiently recommend themselves to thy own best feelings; I now feel most easy to make a few observations, which I believe thou wilt receive in the spirit they are offered - that of unfeigned good-will.

I shall not readily forget the love I felt towards thee at the period of thy first conviction, when thy mind was humbled  
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and tender, and thou hadst received the Truth as it is in Jesus, fully believe, in the love of it. According to the measure of my own experience. I felt great unity with thee therein, & I now feel a lively desire that nothing either in thee or in myself, may be the means of interrupting this precious unity - even the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. We have need to bear in remembrance the counsel of an Apostle; and "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness & meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph: IV. 1-3.

I feel tenderly for thee. & all upright professors of the principles maintained by our religious Society, in Hobart Town, on account of the grievous offence that has arisen from the shameful & disgusting conduct of Theophilus Pollard. Prior to my leaving V. D. Land I was not aware of any thing by which he had belied his profession as a sincere penitent, desiring to act in strict accordance with the principles of the Gospel. I certainly did hear the report of his having sought an interview with the young woman he has since formed an adulterous connection with, for the avowed purpose of offering to marry her: but the charge was of so flagrant a nature, & involved such an utter abandonment of every thing good, moral as well as religious, that thou wilt not be surprised when I tell thee, I wholly disbelieved it. And when Theophilus

denied it, I stated that the person who was said to have given rise to the report flatly denied it also, I gave him credit for speaking the truth, & believed the whole story to be a slander. I may observe, however, that I was not altogether without fear that some remark of his, intended as jocose, might have given rise to the report, & I thought it partook too much of levity for one professing as he did, & whose besetting sins in former days had been of the character I knew them to have been; & I gave him counsel accordingly. What thus came before me I could not with any propriety have brought before a Monthly Meeting; & I think thou art greatly mistaken in supposing that James Backhouse, even with his knowledge of the proposal of T. Pollard to Wm. Rayner, (seeing that he listened to the counsel that was offered him on the subject, & seemed disposed to act upon it) was called upon to lay the matter before Friends. Such a step, under the existing circumstances, would have been altogether premature & contrary to ~~the~~ Gospel order, & to the rules of our Society founded thereon (see Matt. XVIII. 15-17,) as I think he has conclusively shewn in the accompanying letter.

But, my dear friend,! why shouldst thou be surprised, or unduly discouraged, because offences have arisen? Was there ever a Community of Christians who had been favoured with a measure of the Divine blessing that were exempted from this trial of their

their faith? Nay, truly, "Offences must needs come." The enemy will ever be seeking to "sow tares among the wheat." But the unbelief or departure from the faith of some, does not make the faith of others of none effect. "To his own master must everyone stand or fall." And if any one stumble, is it not our duty to endeavour to reclaim him, if there be a door of hope open; and meanwhile, for Christ's sake, be willing to bear the reproach cast upon the Church, in common with the rest of our brethren who are faithful. It is a Christian duty to "bear one another's burdens & so fulfil the law of Christ." Nor should we be more jealous of our own reputation, than that the wholesome discipline which Christ has established should be faithfully administered; which could never be done if, when a brother, or one who has been regarded as such, walks disorderly, those who are more exemplary & consistent, were to take offence & withdraw from communion with the body.

But perhaps thou hast been tempted to reason thus: 'I see none who make profession with Friends in this place, who in their lives come up to that standard of perfection which is held up to view in the Gospel, & which would be the consequence of a strict adherence to the principles of the Society.' Well, my brother, suppose this to be the case, & that we are too generally weak & imperfect Christians. We have the more need to bear with one

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another's infirmities, where sin is not unto death, that "that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather that it may be healed;" & that we may be the means of strengthening one another's hands <sup>in</sup> righteousness. At the same time, we need "have no fellowship with the works of darkness," in any, "but rather reprove them," & unite with our brethren in plainly testifying against those who persist in them. But when offences of this kind unhappily occur, instead of "turning our backs in the day of battle," & giving the enemy of souls an advantage, who seeks to lay waste the Lord's heritage, ought we not under the direction & power of his Spirit, to lift up a standard against the adversary? Surely we should know "the Lord to be the strength of such as "turn the battle to the gate." Every unhallowed thing would be excluded from our borders, & the cause of Truth would eventually be cleared, even the enemies of religion themselves being judges. Yet there is need for discrimination in the exercise of our Discipline. While "zealous in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," dealing promptly & faithfully with such as "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, lest they be as spots in our feasts of charity," yet of some we should have compassion, making a difference; & others we should save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." We should constantly bear in mind that the Lord our God hath

76) hath long borne with us, in the riches of his forbearance and mercy, for our dear Redeemer's sake, & has not left us to perish in our waywardness & folly, & frequent departures from him, which most of us have to enumerate with shame & humiliation.

And remember, my dear friend, that in thy own case, by thy own acknowledgment, thou hast for a long season lived in comparative forgetfulness of God, & in neglect of the all-important concern of thy soul's salvation: yet the Lord hath followed thee unto a late hour, even unto hoar hairs, may I not say? & has visited thee with a sense of his pardoning love & mercy in Christ Jesus — yea, with the Day-spring from on high! All this I believe he has done for thee: and wilt thou be swift to let in hard thoughts of thy brethren, many of whom are participators with thyself of the Divine mercy; and, because they are not, perhaps, any of them perfect Christians, practically say unto them, 'Stand by thyself,' & thereby weaken their hands? Bear with me while I lay the matter before thee in the light in which it presents itself to my mind, desiring for thee, & for myself, & for all who desire to love the Lord Jesus, & serve him in sincerity & in truth, that we may not weaken but strengthen one another's hands in righteousness, and that "keeping ourselves in the love of God, we may be looking [with holy confidence] for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (See Matt. XVIII. 23, &c. to the end of the Chapter.)

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In regard to excluding Friends from thy house, though, thro' the inadvertence of William Rayner, thou art not altogether accountable for the awkward position in which they were placed while waiting at the door; yet it is due to bear in mind, that thou voluntarily offered them the use of the room at the outset, & even from a person who was in no way connected with the Society, civility according to common custom, required that they should have received general notice: nor was it what I should have expected, knowing thee, so far as I can speak, from observation, to act generally with courtesy towards others, I say I should not have expected to hear of thy shutting thy doors against any body of persons, under such circumstances, until thou hadst at least afforded them a few weeks, to allow of their obtaining a convenient place as a substitute to meet in. But I doubt not, that ere this, as thy mind has been enabled calmly to review the past, in the light of the faithful & unflattering Witness in thy own breast, thou hast taken blame to thyself in having, under strong momentary feeling of dissatisfaction, forgotten the exhortation of the Apostle Peter, to "love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous." And, my dear friend, under the feeling of Christian love, knowing by experience that it is an easy matter to err, & therefore not desiring to condemn thee any further than the Light in thy own conscience passes judgment =

78) judgment upon thee; if thou seest thou hast erred (as thy sincere friends believe thee to have done) in acting so precipitately, let me entreat thee not to shrink from acknowledging it; and seek to be restored to full unity with Friends, lest thou give the world occasion to blaspheme, & bring reproach both on thyself, and on the cause of Christ, through the very medium by which thou probably sought to avoid the one and the other - as far as thou wast thyself concerned. And let us, "put on as the elect of God, holy & beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness of mind, long-suffering; forbearing one another, & forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

With the salutation of Christian love,

I remain,

thy friend,

Geo. W. Walker.

P.S. I shall be glad to hear that thy health is improved.

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