

became distinguished by faith in the perceptible teachings of Christ by his Spirit, and in that faith they were maintained in love and unity. Composed as the body was of men of different dispositions and gifts, as well as of a variety of spiritual growth there was a call for the exercise of Christian Charity and of forbearance one with another in love, and these graces were practiced. How patiently did they bear with their brethren who had known the Truth and had departed from it—how faithfully & tenderly did they labor for their restoration—and how were they helped and blessed in these labors to the preservation of the harmony of the Church when this harmony was threatened or interrupted. On reflecting upon our own condition and upon the widely scattered Settlements of Friends in America, and upon the number of Yearly Meetings on your Continent, warm and earnest desires are afresh raised within us that you and we, beloved brethren, may all partake of this fellowship, unity and love which have so greatly contributed to the joy and strength of the body. Whilst each Yearly Meeting maintains its right place, whilst each exercises its independent Character, may it feel also its close Connection with the others in Christ, who is Head over all things to His Church. May each be concerned in humility before the Lord to honor the others, and when Circumstances arise such as a decrease, or an enlargement of numbers within the limits of a Yearly Meeting, which may render a union with another Yearly Meeting, or a division into two such bodies desirable, we would query whether advantages would not result from a Meeting in circumstances, taking Counsel with their brethren of other Yearly Meetings.

We have a deep sense of the goodness wherewith the Lord has condescended to own our religious Society in the economy of our discipline, both as regards the Meetings established for its support, and the character of the discipline itself, and whilst there is a steady, patient concern to uphold in faithfulness, integrity and love, the Christian doctrines and practices of the body, we believe that we should there be through human infirmity, some departure from the right exercise of the discipline, the setting up of separate Meetings, either for worship or discipline, will be found to be out of the true order of the gospel. We cannot easily set forth the sense we have of the desolating effects on all around, of dissension among brethren, and of a separating one from another of those

whom the great ~~the~~ Head of the Church has designed to show forth his praise. If beloved friends, there had been on the part of any, a willingness to bring about a separation, instead of a deep and patient travail of Spirit for the removal of difficulties, we would affectionately and earnestly entreat such in the name of Him who is emphatically the Repairer of the breaches, the Restorer of paths to dwell in, to seek the ability which he alone can give to labor for that restoration of love and unity, without which the cause for which we were raised up a people may be greatly frustrated. The great danger of divisions among brethren, both to those who go and to those who are left behind—their withering influence on the young and inexperienced—their desolating tendency as regards the body at large—the disesteem which they must in the eyes of others, bring upon our profession of dependence on the immediate guidance and teachings of the Spirit of God, and upon the government of Christ in his Church, should alarm us all at the evils of separation; they should drive us to the watch-tower and keep us there—and as we are so kept, we have faith to believe that there would be no increase of separations in our religious Society.

We feel, dear friends, the serious importance of your position and of ours. Whilst some of your Meetings are settled in large cities, a very great proportion of your members are widely spread over a vast Continent, much of which was but lately a wilderness, but where the population is now rapidly increasing. We are living in a densely peopled land where the religion of Christ has been professed for many centuries. We are all alike subject to the temptations and trials incident to man; but we have our respective positions in the militant Church and in the world—we have each our peculiar temptations and snares. May we be deeply humbled before God. We feel that we are not occupying that place amongst men which He graciously designed, that as self-denying, spiritually minded followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should occupy. But blessed be his holy name, in his long-suffering mercy He has not forsaken us.—May we then with sincerity of heart, with singleness of purpose, and with devotedness to the service of Christ, be given up in faith in the renewings of the Holy Ghost, to fulfill according to his will, His gracious design in raising us up, and maintaining us unto this day as a distinct Christian Community.