

no report but had brought in another thing which was not committed to their charge. In this Epistle he said there were charges against our Y. M. noticed. He knew not that such charges had been made, but, said he, this Epistle makes charges against all the Yearly Meetings on the Continent.

Gerard T. Hopkins.

said "This is a very unexpected and unaccountable document. This Y.M. is placed under trying circumstances. We all know that a separation has taken place in a neighboring Y.M. and it is one which has caused a great trial in our Society at large. It was a separation which involved a breach of the precious Discipline which has bound and which I trust still binds the faithful members of our Society. There was a time when this Y.M. stood in the relation and station which is described in the document just read in relation to the Y. M's at large, that is, that they are independent bodies. It is true they stand independent of each other, but it is equally true that they are bound together by that which binds. And while this Y.M. stood clear it was in its power last year to have kept clear of the confusion which has commenced spreading over the Society. I can say as one that we ought to have kept clear and not taken hold of that which has placed us in no small degree in connexion with those who thus left the body and who established themselves under the character of a Y.M. And whilst I advert to this circumstance I desire to do it tenderly, for I feel for my brethren who are here and who have considered that they had the privilege of meeting with us because at our last Y.M. we received and answered the Epistle from this new meeting.

I say if we had kept clear of this thing we should now have been placed under different circumstances. Indeed I could wish ardently that such were not the case. But, my friends, that step which was taken has not been confined in its influence to the limits it then occupied. It has spread and is spreading.

I have been astonished at the circumstances that the Epistles from the several Yearly Meetings of Friends upon this Continent which have been in a state of intimate connexion with us, which have always found their way to our table and been read in confidence, that Epistles of the same character, marked by the same features and well known to be on the table, should have been accompanied by the remarks which were made on the occasion. That there were Epistles on the table thus regularly brought forward and thus clearly known cannot I presume be denied. What other papers there are of an unknown character I must leave, but my friends, allow me to say that the Discipline which is our guide applied to this case. When there are communications from inferior meetings, or meetings we correspond with of a novel character, they are to be referred to a committee, but when Epistles come from meetings we have long known we are not to be thus particular because we have ever been in the habit of accepting these. The time has never been when it was proper to turn these aside to a committee. But if there is anything novel which by being admitted would involve the meeting in a difficulty, there is a provision made by the Discipline which reaches the case.

And these papers, whatever they are, ought to have been thus turned over. But now after having submitted these Epistles and papers for the special object of examination and report, to the Representa-

tives of the Y.M., we find that instead of offering anything in relation to this they are kept in the background and the representatives have brought that before us which has been as unexpected as unlooked for. Where will they look for their authority? Is it to be found in the minute which was made on the occasion? Well! we profess to be a civil, honest people! and honesty should pervade every step we take. I say again I am astonished and cannot approve of the introduction of this Epistle because the Y.M. as a body ought to have travelled under the exercise, and then if it had seen proper have laid it before the representatives. This would have been right, but the Y.M. has not travelled under this concern, and this committee of representatives have brought forward that which was not laid upon them. I cannot approve of the step. And in relation to the epistles, as they found their way regularly here they ought to be read when we see the trials and weaknesses the Society is under in many places. The Yearly Meetings have unfolded to us their trials, and we are deeply interested in knowing the matter these epistles contain. It is our duty to become informed--we are ignorant of them. It is well known to individuals what are the features of these epistles, and though these features be conceded and though the epistles be suppressed and the Society be left ignorant, it is not true in relation to individuals. These epistles are documents which are not kept secret. They are approved in the Y.Ms at large and read in Y. Meetings and individual members of our Society will find out through this channel what they contain. I may say it is the duty of the Y.M. to come to a knowledge of what these epistles contain. We may attempt to suppress them but it will be at variance with honesty."

Some other friends spoke in a similar manner, accusing the representatives of having transcended their powers, when Thomas Evans of Philadelphia made remarks at considerable length against the Epistle. He noticed several particulars in which he said it was "incorrect." The Epistle stated that the Society of Friends had never had a creed. He thought it unnecessary to detain the meeting many moments by attempting to prove a fact so obvious. Any person by consulting Sewel's History, the most authentic History of the Society of Friends, would find no less than three publications which may be called creeds. He stated what he thought a creed was [viz] a confession of faith. The epistle was incorrect in stating that the projectors of the plan for the different Y. Meetings to appoint delegates who should meet together and take into consideration the concerns of Society had an intention to domineer over their fellow members. How could the writers of the Epistle penetrate into the secret recesses of the hearts of those individuals and say what were their intentions. Again, the Epistle stated