

Epistle 220

by George Fox

We must walk in the truth and light of the Lord, and address disobedience and false reports in a gospel-way to honor God and spread his truth.

Scripture: Romans 2:23

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Accountability"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the importance of addressing reports, backbiting, and dishonorable behavior among Friends, urging them to search out and stop such actions in accordance with God's commandments. He also calls for accountability within the community, especially towards those who have dishonored God and the truth, advising to confront them in a gospel-way and issue public testimonies if needed. The goal is to maintain the honor of God and the truth, ensuring that all who profess the truth walk in the light and integrity of the Lord.

Transcript

If, among Friends, any reports or surmises be about any, or any backbitings, or whisperings, all such things must be stopped and searched out; for thus saith the Lord, 'Thou shalt not raise a false report among my people [Exo 23:1]'

And furthermore, that Friends take notice of all such Friends as go to sea, seamen, merchants, masters of ships and passengers, abroad and at home, that profess the truth, that if they have any ways dishonoured the Lord God [Rom 2:23], and brought an evil report, either in their trading, lives or conversations, upon the truth and the good land, and dishonoured the Lord God and his name, truth, and people; that they may search into the bottom of it; that so, if they have done any thing worthy of condemnation and judgment, it may be past upon them without any respect of persons [various, e.g. Lev 19:15]. And, if the report be false, let their innocency be manifest, and the reporter reproved. And so, that all that profess truth, may walk in the truth and the light of the Lord [Isa 2:5], who are 'children of light [e.g. John 12:36],' who have their name after the living God.

And all to be circumspect, diligent, and careful in all these things, that in nowise God may be dishonoured; but in all things your lives, and words may preach, that profess the truth. And all of them that have gone from England and dishonoured God beyond sea, to write over sea, to search out and know the ground of the matter, that all obstructions that have hindered the glory of God, and the spreading of his truth, may be taken away; that the Lord's name may not be dishonoured, nor his way and truth evil spoken of [2 Pet 2:2].

. . .

And all Friends that have dishonoured God, and his truth, and people, and Friends have been to admonish them in a gospel-way, and they still go on in their wickedness and do not repent; Friends may draw up a paper at their meeting, (when they are clear of them,) against them and their disorderly walking [2 Th 3:6], and unruly spirits, and looseness, in general words, not mentioning the particulars, except they be notoriously known. And Friends to do this with speed, and to bring it to the meetings; and if any one be known to be an open offender, that then there may be an open testimony against him in the particular; showing that we have no unity nor fellowship with such workers of darkness [Eph 5:11], and how that they cast out themselves from amongst us, being gone from the life and power of God; in which our fellowship is. And that copies of the paper may be read in meetings, and the copies of the papers to be sent to the men's meetings in the countries where they live.

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