

**RULES OF DISCIPLINE OF
THE YEARLY MEETING,
HELD ON RHODE ISLAND,
FOR NEW ENGLAND**

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Rules of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting, Held on Rhode Island, for New England by Various

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VARIOUS

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NEW ENGLAND.

PRINTED BY DIRECTION OF THE MEETING.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE REVISED EDITION PRINTED IN 1809.

SINCE the printing of the Book of Discipline, about twenty-four years have elapsed; during which period, the new regulations which have taken place have rendered it an imperfect collection of the rules of the Society; and, the Book being out of print, the Yearly Meeting committed the revisal of our Discipline to the Meeting for Sufferings, in 1807, which meeting having with care and diligence completed the said revisal, and laid it before the Yearly Meeting, in the sixth month, 1809; this body adopted the following as the Discipline of the Society, and directed the same to be printed, in order:—

1st. That every quarterly and monthly meeting may be furnished with a fair and correct collection of the minutes and advices which have been agreed to, for regulating the affairs of the Society.

2dly. “That these minutes and advices, being more generally received, may be more uniformly observed and put in practice; that order, unity, peace and harmony, may be preserved throughout the churches.”

3dly. “That, in an especial manner, the youth of the present time and of succeeding generations,

may not only be early and more fully instructed in our religious principles, but in the nature and design of our Christian discipline; and, through divine assistance, be enabled to adorn our holy profession, by a consistent conduct and circumspect conversation in all godliness and honesty; thereby avoiding the reproach which some, through a defection in principle, or a degeneracy in practice, have brought upon themselves, and the body of which they profess to be members."

4thly. "That the unfaithful, the immoral, and the libertine professors, may be seasonably reminded of their danger and of their duty, as well as of the great labor, which, in much gospel love, hath been from time to time bestowed for their help and recovery; and that such as continue to despise and reject the convictions of truth, and the counsel of their brethren, and refuse to be reclaimed, may be made sensible that they themselves are the cause of their separation from our religious fellowship and communion."

And, in order that these purposes may be more fully answered, the following rules and regulations are, on due consideration, recommended to the observance of friends, overseers and meetings. In the exercise of this discipline, care, persuasion and gentle dealing, ought to be our practice; laboring, in love and meekness, to bring such as transgress to a sense of their error. But if any cannot be reclaimed, by our Christian endeavors, the extent of our judgment and procedure is, the disowning of such to be of our communion. And as this authority and practice is Christian, so it is laudable and

reasonable in society; and as it is attended to, in uprightness and singleness of heart, it will tend to promote the good and welfare of the Church, and to unite in a care and concern for the oversight one of another, that all may endeavor to walk decently, humbly, and honestly, and be of one mind, as becomes the servants and followers of our Holy Lord and Law-Giver; and to practice that commendable order, ever necessary in the Christian Church, agreeably to that injunction of our blessed Lord, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican."

This order is also enjoined by that eminent apostle, Paul, in his epistle to the Phillippians, iv. 8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now, whatsoever appears in any contrary to these, may in general be said to come under the notice of friends, overseers and meetings.

And as it has been experienced, that in those meetings great comfort and satisfaction have been

received and enjoyed, when the members have attended them in awe, humility, and love, with no other view than the honor of God, and the help and assistance one of another, this meeting doth, in brotherly love, exhort all friends carefully to gather in uprightness and singleness of heart, suitable to our calling, and the dignity of that Power which will preside and govern in all our meetings, as we meekly abide under its holy influence. This will divest us of partiality, and stiffness of opinion, and all high thoughts of ourselves, and lead into patience and condescension, according to that declaration of our blessed Lord, "He that is greatest among you, shall be your servant."

It is to be observed, that the dates at the end of the minutes and advices, denote the years in which they were issued by the yearly meeting from the records of which they were taken.

The book is bound with blank leaves, for the purpose of making future additions, which are to be inserted in the manner which may be directed by the yearly meeting. No other additions are to be made.

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