

**RULES OF DISCIPLINE OF THE YEARLY
MEETING OF FRIENDS FOR
PENNSYLVANIA, NEW JERSEY,
DELAWARE, AND THE EASTERN PARTS
OF MARYLAND. STEREOTYPE EDITION**

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SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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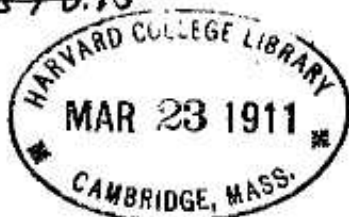
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INTRODUCTION.

AS it hath pleased the Lord in these latter days, by his spirit and power, to gather a people to himself; and, releasing them from the impositions and teachings of men, to inspire them with degrees of the same universal love and good-will by which the dispensation of the gospel was ushered in—these have been engaged to meet together for the worship of God in Spirit, according to the direction of the holy Lawgiver; as also for the exercise of a tender care over each other, that all may be preserved in unity of faith and practice, answerable to the description which He the ever-blessed Shepherd gave of his flock: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John xiii. 35.

For this important end, and as an exterior hedge of preservation to us, against the many temptations

and dangers, to which our situation in this world exposes us, rules for the government of the Society have been made and approved from time to time, and the following now form our code of discipline. In the exercise whereof it is to be observed, that, if any member be found in a conduct subversive of its order, or repugnant to the religious principles and testimonies which we believe we are entrusted with, for the promotion of truth and righteousness in the earth, it becomes our indispensable duty to treat with such, in meekness and brotherly compassion, without unnecessary delay or improper exposure; according to the direction of our Lord to his church: "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." Matt. xviii. 15-17.

This is the extent of the Society's censure against irreclaimable offenders, they are disowned as members of our religious community; which is recom-

mended to be done in such a disposition of mind, as may convince them, that we sincerely desire their recovery and restoration, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. Gal. vi. 1.

For the more regular and effectual support of this order of the Society, beside the usual meetings for the purpose of Divine worship, others are instituted; such as, *First*, Preparative meetings, which are subordinate to the Monthly, and commonly consist of the members of a meeting for worship: *Second*, Monthly meetings, each of which commonly consists of several Preparative meetings, all subordinate to the Quarterly Meeting: *Third*, Quarterly meetings, each of which consists of several of the Monthly meetings; it and its branches being under the direction of the Yearly Meeting, which embracing the whole, its decisions are obligatory upon all.

These meetings have all distinct allotments of service; and as experience shows, that when this service is attended to in uprightness and dedication of heart, with a single eye to the honour of our Holy Head, and the help and edification of one another, in the love wherewith He has loved us, our assemblies are often favored with his aid and direction; Friends are affectionately desired and exhorted, to be diligent in the attendance of them;

and when met, humbly seek to be clothed with the spirit of wisdom and charity: this will divest the mind of a dependance on our own strength and abilities, endue us with patience and condescension toward each other; and being preserved in fellowship agreeably to our Lord's declaration, "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," a qualification will be experienced in our several stations and movements, to build up one another in that faith, which works by love to the purifying of the heart.

So may we be living members of the Church-militant on earth; and inhabitants of that city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder the Lord is; knowing indeed with exceeding joy that great is He the Holy One of Israel in the midst of her.

RULES OF DISCIPLINE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

IT is the sense of this meeting, that offenders inclining to make acknowledgment of their offences, do prepare the same in writing, and if, on consulting the overseers or other judicious Friends, the purport appears suitable to the occasion, and the situation of the party will admit of it, he or she may present it to the meeting in person, and stay till it is read; when, after time given for a solid pause, the applicant should withdraw before that or any other business is proceeded upon. The meeting is then to consider the case, and when a conclusion is come to, appoint two or more Friends to inform the party thereof. — 1743, 1806.

When a disowned person removes out of the verge of the meeting which disowned him or her, and applies thereto for reinstatement, acknowledging his or her error, and if by reason of the distance the applicant cannot be conveniently treated with in person, the said meeting may correspond with the Monthly Meeting within the compass of which he or she resides, and inquire into his or her