

Discipline
of the
Yearly Meeting of Friends
held in
Baltimore.

Introduction.

In the morning of the gospel day, the apostles and disciples found it necessary to meet together for the consolation and strength one of another; when, pursuant to the nature and design of the gospel, which brought peace on earth and good will to men, a care arose for the edification of the church, and that all, being of one family, might be of one mind.

And as it hath pleased the Great Head of the Church, to gather us a people to himself, and to inspire us with ^{degrees of} the same universal love and goodwill, by which was ushered in the dispensation of the gospel, we are engaged not only to meet together for the worship of God, but also for the exercise of a christian care over each other, for the preservation of all 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 13. 35

For this important end, and as an exterior hedge of preservation to us, against the many temptations and dangers to which we are exposed, the following rules which have been occasionally adopted by the society, 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 testimonies with which we believe we are intrusted for the promotion of truth and righteousness, it becomes our indispensable duty to treat with such in christian meekness and brotherly com-

passion, 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 to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican." Math. chap 18. v 15. 16. 17.

This is the extent of the censure of the society against irreclaimable offenders, and whilst we disown them from being members of our religious community, it is recommended to be done in such a disposition of mind, as may convince them that we sincerely desire their recovery and restoration. From the right exercise hereof, we believe no degree of persecution or imposition can be justly inferred; for the imposition rests on the part of those who (as has sometimes happened) insist on being retained as members, whilst at open variance with our religious body, either in principle or practice.

For the more regular and effectual support of the order of the society, it will be observed, that besides the usual meetings for the purpose of divine worship, others for the exercise of our discipline are instituted subordinate to each other; all of which are either immediately or remotely accountable to the Yearly Meeting. These meetings have distinct allotments of service, and experience has abundantly shown, that when this service is attended to in uprightness and dedication of heart, with a single eye to the honor of our holy Head, and the benefit and edification one of another, in the love wherewith he hath loved us, our assemblies are favoured with his aid and direction.

Although this code of discipline is printed for the use of our own society, yet should it meet the public eye, it is not doubted but the serious and candid reader will observe throughout the whole, the earnest endeavours of the Yearly Meeting for the promotion of virtue and religion.

And whilst we earnestly recommend this work to the notice and regard of Friends, we are not without a clear prospect