

MINISTERS AND ELDERS; AND MEETINGS OF MINISTERS AND ELDERS.

Persuaded as we are, that gospel ministry is not of man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, agreeably to that apostolical charge.—“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified.” 1 Peter iv. 10, 11. Holding it, therefore, to be a doctrine truly christian, that the Spirit of God, is the fountain of all true knowledge in relation to that duty which we owe to Him, and one to another; we earnestly exhort that those amongst us who apprehend that they are called to the ministry of the gospel, may in their public services, especially attend closely to their several and peculiar gifts; waiting for that divine ability, by which they may faithfully and availingly minister the word.

We also desire with earnest solicitude, that those who are placed in the very important department of elders in the church, may evince a correspondent qualification rightly to judge of the ministry; and manifest a concern for the support of our religious testimonies, and the preservation of our Discipline; as well as for the advancement of truth and righteousness; such as these being clothed with christian meekness and wisdom, may even rebuke with authority, and therein will realize that description given by the royal Psalmist,—“Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me it shall be an excellent oil.” Psal. cxli. 5.

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Ministers and elders thus united, become mutually useful to each other; and are as nursing fathers and mothers in the church, particularly to those who are young in the ministry; for this class we earnestly desire that they may with all care and diligence be advised and admonished; and if occasion appear, reproved in a tender and christian spirit; let them also be exhorted frequently to read the Holy scriptures, and earnestly attend to the spirit of truth, which alone can open the mysteries contained in them. Ministers thus abiding in a simple and patient submission to the will of God, and keeping to the openings of divine life in themselves may witness a growth in their gifts; and will also be preserved from extending their declarations further than they find the power of truth to accompany them.

If any in the course of their ministry shall misapply, or draw unsound inferences or wrong conclusions from the text; or shall, at any time, misbehave themselves in point of conduct and conversation, let them be admonished, in love and tenderness, by the elders or overseers, and if they prove refractory, and refuse to acknowledge their faults, they must be further treated with in the wisdom of truth as the case may require.

As the occasion of our religious meetings is solemn, a care should be maintained to guard against any thing that would tend to disorder or confusion therein; when any think they have ought against what is publicly delivered, they should speak to the party privately; and if any shall oppose a minister in his or her preaching or exhortation, or keep on the hat, or show any remarkable dislike to such, when engaged in prayer, let them be speedily admonished, in such manner as may be requisite, unless the ministry of the person

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against whom the uneasiness is expressed has been disapproved by the Monthly Meeting.

Every Monthly Meeting is to select two or more Friends of each sex to sit with the ministers; and they together are to compose a meeting, to be denominated a Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders: care should be taken, that those chosen for this service be prudent discreet Friends, and that they duly discharge the trust confided to them.

When there is occasion for the appointment of one or more elders in any meeting, a committee to consider the subject should be first appointed, both in men's and women's Monthly Meetings, and in this committee the names of the persons who may be thought suitable, should be first mentioned; and when concurred with, reported to the meetings, without consulting the person or persons, or otherwise divulging it. If upon due deliberation the nomination is approved, a minute should be made expressive thereof, and a copy forwarded to the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders. Where the nomination being considered, and the sense of the Monthly Meeting concurred with or otherwise; information thereof should be given to the Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders, and to said Monthly Meetings of the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders.

Certificates of removal are not to convey the rights of eldership; but the division of a Monthly Meeting is not to render the reappointment of elders necessary. But when a Monthly Meeting is divided, should there not be a sufficient number of ministers and elders to compose a select meeting, within each of those Monthly Meetings, the members in both shall continue to compose one Preparative Meeting, until the number shall be sufficient to compose two.

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It is the order of society, that when any Friend appointed to the station of an elder, believes him or herself called to the ministry, and shall have appeared frequently in that capacity in our public religious meetings, that such should withdraw from the meeting of ministers and elders.

When any Friend has frequently appeared in our religious meetings as a minister, and the Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders apprehend that it is seasonable the subject should claim the attention of the Monthly Meeting for discipline, of which the person is a member, they are at liberty to mention the matter therein; and if the Monthly Meetings of men and women Friends, after deliberate consideration, should unite in believing that a gift in the ministry has been committed to him or her, a minute expressive thereof, signed by the clerks, should be forwarded to the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders; where the case being carefully considered, and the sense of the Monthly Meeting concurred with, information should be furnished to the Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders, and the Monthly Meeting to which such Friend belongs, of the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders therein. And until the approbation of the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders is obtained, no such Friend is to be permitted to sit in the meetings of ministers and elders, nor allowed to travel abroad as a minister. When any approved minister apprehends it to be a duty to travel in the service of truth, beyond the limits of their Quarterly Meeting, they are to open their concern in the men's and women's Monthly Meetings to which they belong; and obtain a certificate or minute, (as the occasion may be,) of their unity and concurrence, directed to

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Friends within the parts proposed to be visited; and it is required that when the service is accomplished, the said meetings be informed thereof, and the certificate returned without unnecessary delay.

No ministers are to appoint a meeting beyond the limits of the Quarterly Meeting to which they belong, without the concurrence of their respective Monthly Meetings. And if a minister is concerned to appoint a meeting within the verge of the Quarter, and to wait for the approbation of the Monthly Meetings, appears to interfere with the proper time for appointing such meeting, the united sense of the elders of the Monthly Meeting, of which he or she is a member, or of those of the Monthly Meeting within the compass of which such appointment is proposed, may be accepted as a sufficient privilege.

When any minister is religiously concerned to make a general visit to the meetings of Friends, either within or beyond the limits of the Yearly Meeting, and has obtained a certificate for that purpose; the certificate must also be laid before the respective Quarterly Meetings; and if the concern is concurred with, an endorsement must be entered upon the certificate, and signed by the clerks of the men's and women's meetings.

And in all cases where certificates are granted for Friends concerned to travel in the service of the ministry, the meetings last engaged in deliberating upon the subject, are to take due care that such be provided, if necessary, with suitable companions and the needful accommodation for the comfortable accomplishment of the journey.

The ministers and elders of each Monthly Meeting are required to meet once in three months, at such time and place as the Monthly

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a certificate thereof, signed by the clerk should be granted.

None of the said meetings of ministers and elders are in any wise to interfere with the business arising for Discipline; nor is the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders to suffer its adjournments to interfere with the sittings of the Yearly Meeting for Discipline.

And finally, if any member of our meetings of ministers and elders shall at any time be thought by negligence, unfaithfulness or otherwise to have lost his or her service in that station, so as to become burthensome, and the subject of uneasiness (yet not so as to be under the care of a meeting for Discipline on that account, or for misconduct,) it is advised, that a timely and tender care be extended to such person, according to gospel order; first by concerned individuals, and then by the Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders to which he or she may belong: should these labours prove unavailing, report of the case should be made by that meeting to the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders, where a few Friends should be deputed to assist the Preparative Meeting, in a further extension of labour with the party; if this also prove unavailing, and on report thereof to the said Quarterly Meeting it appears that the said Preparative Meeting has fully discharged its duty to the individual; the case should then be transmitted to the Monthly Meeting for Discipline, of which the party is a member, and left under its care; and he or she ought, from that time to refrain from attending any meetings of ministers and elders until they shall be again recommended or appointed as at first.

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Meeting may direct, in the capacity of a Preparative Meeting of ministers and elders; when after a time of retirement, the queries addressed to such meetings are to be read and considered, and distinct answers made to them in writing, which, when signed by the clerk, are to be conveyed to the ensuing Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders, by two or more Friends, to be mentioned in the report as representatives; here also, if in the course of inquiry any deficiency has appeared, care should be taken that it be remedied.

And in the Quarterly Meetings the same queries are also to be read, together with the answers which are brought from their Preparative Meetings. In these meetings the state of the members is to be considered, that where occasion requires, it, advice and counsel may be seasonably extended; and once in the year, those answers comprised in a written report and signed by the clerk, are to be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders, by four or more Friends appointed as representatives; in this meeting the queries are also to be read with the answers from the several Quarters; and the state of this part of the society being collected and considered, advices adapted thereto may, if requisite, be issued to the subordinate select meetings. Here all such ministers as apprehend they are required to go in truth's service beyond the sea, after obtaining a certificate of the concurrence of the Monthly Meeting, endorsed by the respective Quarter, are to communicate their prospects of duty relative thereto, and produce the said certificates, and if, upon mature consideration, the same are united with by the said meeting of ministers and elders,

MODERATION AND TEMPERANCE.

It is a consideration claiming our serious regard, that our worthy ancestors having their views directed towards an enduring inheritance, and their affections established upon things above, sought not after the splendour of this world. In minds thus bent upon seeking a more glorious inheritance, the love of this world had but little influence, they were conspicuous examples of temperance and moderation. A defection from this simplicity of heart and heavenly mindedness, leading into the inordinate love and pursuit of the things of this world, hath prevailed with too many amongst us, and produced the fruits of pride and ambition. These have introduced many imaginary wants from which our ancestors were preserved by their simplicity. To satisfy these wants some have been excited to enter into a larger extension of trade and commerce than they had stock and ability to conduct. Vain ambition and an emulation inconsistent with the truth, have led many into extravagant expenses. Reduced by these means in their circumstances, yet unwilling to lessen their appearance in the world, some have resorted to indirect methods to procure a temporary support, which have frequently ended in failures and bankruptcies.

Whilst therefore, we hold it to be an indubitable truth, that moderation and temperance are inseparable from the christian religion, we affectionately beseech our members to abstain from all appearance of evil in relation thereto. And particularly as respects the unnecessary use of intoxicating liquors of every description. Is it not af-