

the profession which this necessarily involves, experience has always confirmed the truth, that it has been as they are thus held, that they have fulfilled the purposes of their establishment. In the organization of these meetings a beautiful order was introduced, consistent with the simplicity and authority of the unchangeable truth - an order which has proved eminently salutary and efficient in the Church. Yearly, Quarterly, Monthly, and Preparative meetings, were set up and are still continued, for the purpose of Church government, subordinate and accountable one unto another - Preparative to Monthly, Monthly to Quarterly, and Quarterly to the Yearly Meeting. The last being the highest tribunal in this Church organization, from whose decisions there is no appeal, and exercising over all below it a power of supervision and control, looking to the good of the members comprising them, and to the honor of truth; and in all cases where it deems it necessary, directing their proceedings in the authority which the truth gives.

This subordination and order remain to be essential to our preservation, and cannot be departed from. Any innovation must necessarily lead to weakness and confusion, and the cause of truth must suffer from it. As introduced and practised by our ancestors they are simple and effective, for they are founded in the truth, and derive their authority thence. We can share neither in this authority nor prove oppressive to meetings or individuals, but strengthening and preserving.

In the history of our Society it is found that as our numbers increased our meetings necessarily were multiplied, and additional Yearly and subordinate meetings were established - each Yearly Meeting being independent of the other in forming and administering its own discipline, and yet all being bound together in the maintenance of the same sacred doctrine and in the support of the same Christian testimony, being essentially one people, a member removing from one Yearly Meeting unto another is entitled to all the rights and privileges of that Yearly Meeting into which he removes. Ministers of the Gospel in the discharge of their high calling when concerned to visit the Churches are accredited in their capacity to presenting testimony of their being in unity as such with their friends at home, and thus, and in many other ways, the concepts of our religious compact are extended throughout the Society at large.

As a connecting link between the different Yearly Meetings

- as a means of opening a channel through which a knowledge of the affairs of truth may be made known, and by which each body may assist the other, either in the way of counsel or encouragement, and for the comfort and edification of one another, an epistolary correspondence was early introduced and has been maintained by Yearly Meetings in the opening of their annual conference - a practice which has been so widely owned and favored by the Holy Head of the Church that it cannot be discontinued without seriously affecting the welfare of Society.

We are deeply impressed with the conviction that any continued departure from the usage of our Religious Society in the particulars to which we have now briefly adverted cannot fail to be productive of very serious consequences - and on account of the painful circumstances that have been presented to us, we feel bound to bear a solemn testimony, more specifically in relation to some of these subjects.

This Conference is united in the belief, that it is essential for us clearly to understand and inviolably to sustain the rights that belong to distinct Yearly Meetings. It cannot be questioned that if a Yearly Meeting should manifest unbelief in Christian faith - if it should promulgate views inconsistent with the principles professed by Friends, or should not maintain our Christian testimony, that it may then become the duty of the other Yearly Meetings to extend to it brotherly rebuke or admonition for its destruction. But in the exercise of those functions which legitimately and exclusively belong to itself - as the forming or administering its own discipline - any interference by another Yearly Meeting or attempt to control its action in these respects, would be an infraction of our established order, and fraught with consequences perilous to the whole brotherhood of Yearly Meetings, against which we feel solemnly bound to bear testimony.

An abridgment of the rights of members, by refusing to receive credentials, issued by the meetings in another Yearly Meeting, except for causes provided for in Discipline is destructive of the established order of Society. On the other hand any attempt on the part of a Meeting to confer upon individuals, privileges which they have forfeited in their own Meeting, or to sustain them in assumed rights to which they are not entitled, cannot fail to produce confusion and to disturb the harmony of Friends.