

Free Quakers - Phila. Monthly Meeting

T H E
DISCIPLINE

O F T H E

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

BY SOME STYLED THE

FREE QUAKERS,

Unanimously agreed to in their Meeting for Business,
held in PHILADELPHIA, on the Sixth Day of the
Eighth Month, 1781.

TH E Creator of man, having bestowed upon individuals greater and less natural abilities and opportunities of improvement, a variety of sentiments, respecting the duties which we owe to him, necessarily arises among us, and it becomes essential to our happiness, that we may perform those duties in that way which we think most acceptable to him. And therefore, when we contemplate the long continued and earnest contest which has been maintained, and the torrents of blood which, in other countries, have been shed in defence of this precious privilege, we cannot but acknowledge it to be a signal instance of the immediate care of a divine providence over the people of America, that he has, in the present great revolution, thus far established among us governments under which no man, who acknowledges the being of a God, can be abridged of any civil right on account of his religious sentiments; while other nations, who see and lament their wretched situation, are yet groaning under a grievous bondage. But governments established upon those liberal, just, and truly christian principles, and wisely confined to the great objects of ascertaining and defending civil rights, in avoiding the possibility of wounding the conscience of any, must unavoidably leave some cases unprovided for, which come properly under the care of religious societies. Hence we are not only left at liberty to act agreeably to our sentiments; but the necessity and obligation of establishing and supporting religious societies, are increased and strengthened.

We

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We acknowledge the kindness of providence, in awakening us to a view of the deplorable situation in which we have been.---Disowned and rejected by those among whom we have been educated, and without a hope of being ever again united to them:---Separated and scattered abroad, as if we had been aliens in a strange land, the prospect of our situation has indeed humbled us: But he whose mercy endureth forever, has preserved us, and induced us to confide that he will care for us. And being made sensible of the indispensable necessity of uniting together, we have cast our care upon the great preserver of men, and depending upon him for our support, conceive it to be a duty which we owe to ourselves, our children, and families, to establish and support among us public meetings for religious worship; to appoint stated meetings for conducting the affairs of the society, upon principles as liberal and enlarged towards one another, as those adopted by the state are toward all, and paying a due regard to the principles of our forefathers, and the spirit of the wise regulations established by them, to fix upon such rules as may enable us to preserve decency and good order; and among other things, to agree upon, and make known a decent form of marriage, which may at once secure the rights of parents and of children;---and a mode of forming and preserving records of marriages, births and burials.

Wherefore, after mature deliberation, it was unanimously agreed as follows, to wit.

First. Meetings for public worship shall be established and kept up. The time and place of holding them, shall be ordered and directed by the meeting for business. And it is earnestly recommended to all who come to our meetings for worship, or meetings for business, to attend precisely at the time appointed.

Secondly. A meeting shall be held monthly, for conducting the business of the society, in which any member may freely express his sentiments, on all business which shall there be determined or considered. In this meeting unanimity and harmony ought to prevail; and where any difference of sentiment may appear, charity and brotherly condescension ought to be shown to one another. Minutes of all the proceedings shall be kept, and for this purpose a clerk shall be appointed, and be under the direction of the meeting. At the opening of each meeting, after a solemn pause for worship, the minutes of the meeting next preceding shall be read.

Thirdly. Persons intending marriage may, either in person or by a friend, inform the meeting for business thereof; but, where it may conveniently be, it is recommended, that the parties proposing marriage do attend the meeting before which the proposal is made. Whereupon a committee shall be appointed to enquire concerning their clearness of other marriage engagements, consent of parents or guardians, and such other matters as relate to the proposed marriage, and report thereon to the next meeting. No reasonable objection appearing, and the parties as aforesaid, signifying the continuation of their intentions, the marriage may be allowed of, and two persons appointed to attend the decent solemnization thereof, and to have the certificate of the same recorded in the book of marriages.

The marriage may be solemnized at a public meeting for worship; or at the

the house of either of the parties; or at the house of their parents or friends, as the parties may chuse; but it is recommended that the same be preceded by a solemn pause and worship to God.

As cases may probably happen, in which it will be inconvenient to postpone marriages, so long as from one monthly meeting to another, in such cases an adjournment of the meeting may be made, the report of the committee received, and the marriage be allowed of as aforesaid.

The solemnization is recommended to be after the following manner, to wit.---The parties standing up, and taking each other by the hand, the man shall declare to this import, That he takes the woman, naming her name, to be his wife, and will be unto her a loving and faithful husband until death shall separate them. And the woman, on her part, shall declare to the import, that she takes the man, naming his name, to be her husband, and will be unto him a loving and faithful wife until death shall separate them.

The certificate whereof may be to the following import, to wit. Whereas A. B. of C. (*expressing also his title or occupation*) son of C. D. of E. and F. his wife, and G. H. daughter of I. K. of L. and M. his wife, having laid their intentions of marriage with each other, before the meeting for business of the society of Friends, styled by some *The Free Quakers*, held at N. the same were allowed of, and, on the day of the month in the year of our Lord (inserting the day, month and year) the said parties appeared at a meeting appointed for the solemnization of the said marriage (*or otherwise as the case may be*) and, taking each other by the hand, the said A. B. did in solemn manner declare, that he took the said G. H. to be his wife, and promised to be unto her a loving and faithful husband until death should separate them: And the said G. H. did in like manner declare, that she took the said A. B. to be her husband, and promised to be unto him a loving and faithful wife until death should separate them. And, in confirmation and testimony of the same, they, the said A. B. and G. H. she assuming the name of her husband, did then and there to these presents set their hands. And we, whose names are also subscribed, being present at the said marriage and subscription, have, as witnesses of the same, hereunto set our hands, the day and year aforesaid.

Fourthly. Records shall be kept of all marriages, births and burials among us. And as these records may be of great importance, and the recording of births and burials will greatly depend on the care of individuals, in giving in an account thereof, it is earnestly recommended to all, to give an early account of both, mentioning the child's name, parentage, and day of its birth; and the name, parentage, title or occupation, age, and day of decease, as well of those who die abroad, when the same can be ascertained, as of those who die among us.

Fifthly. Persons desirous of joining with us in society, signifying the same to the meeting for business, and appearing to be of good character, may be admitted. Whereupon they may give in the names and ages of their children, to be recorded. Should any chuse to go from among us, a minute thereof may be entered among our proceedings.

Sixthly. In cases of controversy respecting property, a reference to disinterested

rested men, either of our own or some other society, and a compliance with their judgment may be recommended, as the most expeditious and least expensive mode of terminating such disputes, and tending to peace and harmony; but it shall be a perpetual rule among us, as a religious society, that we will not otherwise interfere in controversies between one man and another.

This rule being contrary to that of our ancestors in this case, we think it necessary to observe, That however blameable or even "shameful" it might have been in the apostle's day, for brother to go to law with brother "before the unbelievers," in the present day, when the state, of which we ourselves are members, appoint men eminent for their abilities and integrity, to judge of all controversies, and those judges, being themselves Christians, are aided by juries of Christians, there does not appear any just cause for prohibiting appeals to them; on the contrary, to us it seems to be indecent and unjust to speak of these Christian courts, as the apostle spake of those of "the unbelievers;" and as the society who have disowned us, have affected to speak of the courts of justice, when even themselves were the officers, jurors, judges and legislators.

Seventhly. As brethren, each may counsel and advise another in the spirit of love and meekness, as he may see occasion, remembering always that he also may be tempted; but leaving guilt to be punished by the laws of the land, and commending those who err to the grace of God, no public censures shall be passed by us on any. Neither shall a member be deprived of his right among us, on account of his differing in sentiment from any or all of his brethren.

F I N I S.

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