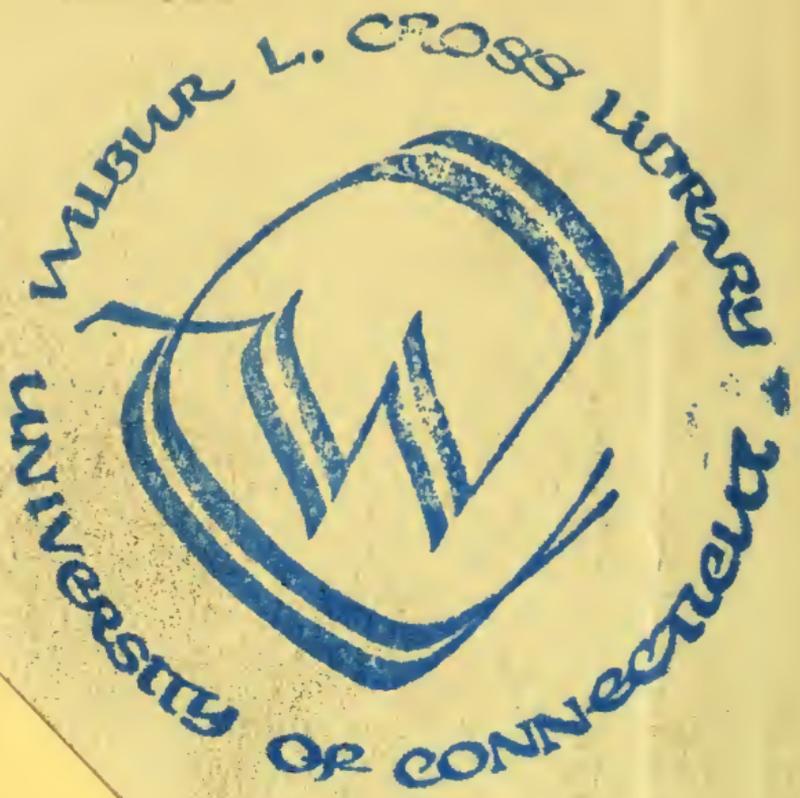


BRIEF EXPOSITION OF THE
ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES AND
REGULATIONS OF THE UNITED
SOCIETY OF BELIEVERS



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BRIEF EXPOSITION

OF THE ESTABLISHED

PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS

OF THE

UNITED SOCIETY OF BELIEVERS

CALLED

SHAKERS.

The power of Truth is great, it must and will prevail,
When false reports shall cease, and sland'rous tongues shall fail.

IMPROVED EDITION.

NEW YORK:

PRINTED BY EDWARD O. JENKINS,
No. 114 Nassau Street.

1846.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS small publication has a twofold object. *First*, to exhibit the people commonly called Shakers, in their proper character, as citizens of the commonwealth, and under the influence and operation of its laws. In this view, it is presented to the statesman, whether legislator, lawyer, judge or jurist. *Second*, to solve the many questions proposed by the religious world, concerning these singular people, as a religious community. For this purpose, it is offered to the professors of religion, of all societies, and all candid inquirers.

The *EXPOSITION*, in its first form, was hastily written for the purpose of obviating a defamatory bill presented to the Legislature of New York. It is now somewhat abridged, in order to comprise, in few words, the main points in question, and afford room for a more full and free discussion of those points, which may afford satisfaction to the intelligent and candid reader.

EXPOSITION.

MANY erroneous opinions are entertained concerning the people generally known by the name of Shakers, which are calculated to mislead the public mind, in respect to the true character of this Society. Many false reports and incorrect statements have been circulated respecting the principles and practice of the Society, which have no foundation in truth. With a view to correct these erroneous opinions, and, as far as in our power, to remove prejudices and false impressions, we are induced, from a sense of duty, to lay before the candid public, a brief statement of facts respecting the principles, government, temporal order, and practical regulations of the Society. This duty we owe to ourselves and to our fellow creatures, for the correct information of the public, and the benefit of all concerned: that all who are governed by the spirit of candor, and wish to know the truth concerning these things, may no longer depend on the vague and inconsistent reports in circulation, from which they can gain no correct knowledge nor just information.

Although the Society has published considerable respecting their faith and principles, yet an opinion seems still to prevail, especially among strangers, that no person can be admitted as a member of the Society without first surrendering all his temporal property, and wholly divesting himself of the government of his family, and the care of his children, if he have any, and subjecting himself and all that he possesses to the arbitrary control of the Elders and leaders of the Society. Nothing can be more erroneous and incorrect than such a supposition. Those things are no more required to obtain admission into this Society than into any other. We believe that no institution, nor any

system of government could be established which would be more compatible with man's free agency, or more consistent with truth, justice, reason, and all our national rights, civil and religious, than the system adopted in this Society. The following primary principles constitute the basis on which this Institution is founded, and by which all its movements and operations are directed.

FAITH AND PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIETY.

1. A life of *innocence* and *purity*, according to the example of Jesus Christ and his first true followers; implying entire abstinence from all sensual and carnal gratifications.

2. LOVE.—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.—Love is the fulfilling of the law.” This is our bond of union.

3. PEACE.—“Follow peace with all men,” is a divine precept; hence our abstinence from war and bloodshed, from all acts of violence towards our fellow men, from all the party contentions and politics of the world, and from all the pursuits of pride and worldly ambition.—“My kingdom [said Christ] is not of this world.”

4. JUSTICE.—“Render to every man his due.—Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” We are to be just and honest in all our dealings with mankind, to discharge all just dues, duties, and equitable claims, as seasonably and effectually as possible.

5. HOLINESS.—“Without which no man shall see the Lord.” Which signifies to be *consecrated*, or set apart from a common to a sacred use. Hence arises all our doctrines and practical rules of dedicating our persons, services and property to social and sacred uses, having adopted the example of the first gospel Church, in establishing and supporting one *consecrated* and *united* interest by the voluntary choice of every member, as a sacred privilege, and not by any undue constraint or persuasion.

6. GOODNESS.—Do good to all men, as far as opportunity and ability may serve, by administering acts of charity and

kindness, and promoting light and truth among mankind. "Whatsoever, ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them."

7. TRUTH.—This principle is opposed to falsehood, lying, deceit and hypocrisy; and implies fidelity, reality, good, earnest sincerity, and punctuality in keeping vows and promises. These principles are the genuine basis of our institution, planted by its first founders, exhibited in all our public writings, justified by Scripture and fair reason, and practically commended as a system of morality and religion, adapted to the best interest and happiness of man, both here and hereafter.

MANNER OF ADMITTING MEMBERS.

It must be obvious to every reasonable person, that the foregoing principles are, in many respects, very contrary to the carnal and selfish nature of fallen man, and doubtless more so than those of any other religious society. Therefore, there is little danger to be apprehended of any person's being flattered or inveigled into this Society, or of joining it from any other motive than purely from the operations of faith and conscience. This, of itself, is the most powerful guard that can be set against the deceptions so often reported to be practiced by the Society in procuring members. Indeed it precludes the possibility of such deceptions to any alarming extent. To this it may be truly added, that all reasonable precaution is used against admitting any person to membership while ignorant of our real faith and principles, or of the following *General Rules*:

1. All persons who unite with this Society, in any degree, must do it freely and voluntarily, according to their own faith and unbiassed judgment.

2. In the testimony of the Society, both public and private, no flattery nor any undue influence is used; but the most plain and explicit statements of its faith and principles are laid before the inquirer; so that the whole ground may be comprehended, as far as possible, by every candidate for admission.

3. No considerations of property are ever made use of by this Society, to induce any person to join it, nor to prevent any one from leaving it ; because it is our faith, that no act of devotion or service that does not flow from the free and voluntary emotions of the heart, can be acceptable to God as an act of true religion.

4. No believing husband or wife is allowed by the principles of this Society, to separate from an unbelieving partner, except by mutual agreement ; unless the conduct of the unbeliever be such as to warrant a separation by the laws of God and man. Nor can any husband or wife, who has otherwise abandoned his or her partner, be received into communion with the Society.

5. Any person becoming a member, must rectify all his wrongs, and, as fast and as far as it is in his power, discharge all just and legal claims, whether of creditors or filial heirs. Nor can any person, not conforming to this rule, long remain in union with the Society. But the Society is not responsible for the debts of any individual, except by agreement ; because such responsibility would involve a principle ruinous to the institution.

6. No difference is to be made in the distribution of parental estate among the heirs, whether they belong to the Society or not ; but an equal partition must be made as far as may be practicable and consistent with reason and justice.

7. If an unbelieving wife separate from a believing husband, by agreement, the husband must give her a just and reasonable share of the property ; and if they have children who have arrived to years of understanding sufficient to judge for themselves, and who choose to go with their mother, they are not to be disinherited on that account. Though the character of this institution has been much censured on this ground, yet we boldly assert, that the rule above stated has never, to our knowledge, been violated by this Society.

8. Industry, temperance and frugality, are prominent features of this institution. No member who is able to labor,

can be permitted to live idly upon the labors of others. All are required to be employed in some manual occupation, according to their several abilities, when not engaged in other necessary duties.

MANNER OF GOVERNMENT.

It must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that the government of this Society cannot be of a tyrannical and arbitrary character. Nor can any government which is not just and equitable in itself, long exist in it; because the faith and principles of the Society can support no other, as no government can be maintained in it but by the faith and general approbation of the members: besides, the liberal principles held forth in the constitutions and general laws of the land, would be an insurmountable barrier to a government of any other character. And even if this barrier were insufficient, it is well known that the world presents to the view of the natural mind, enjoyments much more pleasing than those contained in the principles of this Society. It would therefore be impossible for a government, which should prove itself tyrannical, and exercise unjust powers, ever to sway the faith of the members, and shut the avenues to the world, so as to prevent them from withdrawing, and seeking the more naturally pleasing enjoyments which it affords.

The rules of government in the Society are adapted to the different orders of which it is composed. In all (as far as respects adults) it is spiritual; its powers and authorities growing out of the *mutual faith, love and confidence* of all the members, and harmoniously concurring in the general form and manner of government established by the first founders of the Society.

1. The effective basis of the government so established, and which is the support of all its institutions, is the faith, voluntary choice, union, and general approbation of the members. It is an established maxim in the Society, that any member who is not reconciled to the faith, order and government established in it, is more injurious than beneficial to

it; besides the loss to himself of his own time and privilege; therefore, whenever this is found to be the case with any one, and he continues in that situation, he is advised peaceably to withdraw. As all who unite with this Society do it voluntarily, and can at any time withdraw, they are in duty bound to submit to its government. All are required by the rules of the Society to do this, or withdraw; and this we think is reasonable, as no body of people can exist in any associated capacity, unless such power be maintained in its government.

2. The leading authority of the Society is vested in a Ministry, generally consisting of four persons, including both sexes. These, together with the Elders and Trustees, constitute the general government of the Society in all its branches; and being supported by the general union and approbation of the members, are invested with power to appoint their successors, and other subordinate officers, as occasion may require; to counsel, advise and direct in all matters, whether of a spiritual or temporal nature; to superintend the concerns of the several families, and establish all needful orders, rules and regulations for the direction and protection of the several branches of the Society; but no rule can be made, nor any member assume a lead, contrary to the original faith and known principles of the Society. And nothing which respects the government, order and general arrangement of the Society, is considered as fully established, until it has received the general approbation of the Society, or of that branch thereof which it more immediately concerns.

3. No creed can be framed to limit the progress of improvement. It is the faith of the Society, that the operations of divine light are unlimited. All are at liberty to improve their talents and exercise their gifts, the younger being subject to the elder, and all in concert with the general lead.

4. In the order and government of the Society, no corporal punishment is approved; nor any external force or violence exercised on any rational person who has come to years of understanding. *Faith, Conscience or Reason* is

sufficient to influence a rational being ; but where these are wanting, the necessary and proper means of restraint are not prohibited.

5. The management of temporal affairs, in families holding a united interest, as far as respects the consecrated property of the Society, is committed to Trustees. These are appointed by the Ministry and Elders ; and being supported as aforesaid, are legally invested with the fee of the real estate belonging to the Society.

All the consecrated property comes under their general charge, together with the oversight of all public business, and all commercial dealings without the bounds of the community. But all the transactions of the Trustees, in the use, management, and disposal of this united interest, must be done in behalf, and for the united benefit, of the Society, and not for any personal or private use or purpose whatever. And in all these things, they are strictly responsible to the leading authority of the Society, for the faithful performance of their duty.

It is also an established principle, that no Trustee, nor any member whatever, shall contract debts of any kind, in behalf of the Society.

ORDER AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE SOCIETY.

This community is divided into several different branches, commonly called families. This division is generally made for the sake of convenience, and is often rendered necessary on account of local situation and occurrent circumstances ; but the proper division and arrangement of the community, without respect to local situation, is into three classes, or progressive degrees of order, as follows :

1. The first, or novitiate class, are those who receive faith, and come into a degree of relation with the Society, but choose to live in their own families, and manage their own temporal concerns. Any who choose, may live in that manner, and be owned as brethren and sisters in the gospel, so long as they live up to its requirements.

Parents are required to be kind and dutiful to each other, to shun every appearance of evil, provide for their family, bring up their children in a godly manner, use, improve and dispose of their property wisely, and manage their affairs according to their own discretion. They may thus continue as long as it comports with their faith, their circumstances, and their spiritual improvement. But they are required to bear in mind the necessity and importance of a spiritual increase, without which they are ever exposed to fall back into the course and spirit of the world ; and they can hold their connection with the Society no longer than they continue to conform to its religious faith and principles.

Such persons are admitted to all the privileges in the Society, spiritual or temporal, necessary to give them a full understanding of all they need to know. No control is exercised by the Society over their persons, property, nor children ; but being members of a religious society, they are to be subject to the spiritual direction of their leaders, and may receive counsel in temporal matters, whenever they feel it necessary to apply for it. If at any time they desire to make a donation to any religious or charitable purpose of the Society, they are at liberty to do so ; provided they be clear of debt, and their circumstances will otherwise admit of it ; but after having freely made the donation they can have no more right to reclaim it, than the members of other religious societies have to reclaim the like donations.

The education and government of children belonging to this class, is an important object. Where the number of private families is sufficient, they may establish a school, and jointly contribute to the support of it, and in this way dispose of their property for the joint benefit of their posterity ; but if any have estates, they may reserve them, in whole or in part, for the benefit of their children when they become of age.

No children are ever taken under the immediate charge of the society, except with the request or free consent of those who have the lawful right and control of them, toge-

ther with the child's own consent. But few, comparatively, are admitted.

Those taken into the society are treated with care and tenderness, receive a good school education, according to their genius, are trained to industry and virtuous habits, restrained from vice, and at a suitable age, led into the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, and practically taught the divine precepts contained in them, particularly those of Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

2. The second, or junior class, is composed of persons who, not having the charge of families, and being under no embarrassments to hinder them from uniting together in community order, choose to enjoy the benefits of that situation. These (for mutual safety) enter into a contract to devote their services, freely, to support the interest of the family of which they are members, so long as they continue in that order; stipulating, at the same time, to claim no pecuniary compensation for their services. But all the members of such families are mutually benefited by the united interest and labors of the whole family, so long as they continue to support the order thereof; and they are amply provided for in health, sickness, and old age. These benefits are secured to them by contract.

Members of this class have the privilege, at their option, by contract, to give freely, the improvement of any part or all of their property, to be used for the mutual benefit of the family to which they belong. The property itself may be resumed at any time, according to the contract; but no interest can be claimed for the use thereof; nor can any member of such family be employed therein for wages of any kind. Members of this class may retain the lawful ownership of all their own property, as long as they think it proper, and choose so to do; but at any time, after having gained sufficient experience, to be able to act deliberately and understandingly, they may, if they choose, dedicate and devote a part, or the whole, and consecrate it forever, to the support of the institution. But this is a matter of free

choice; no one is urged to do so, but they are rather advised, in such cases, to consider the matter well, so as not to do it until they have a full understanding of its consequences; lest they should do it prematurely, and afterwards repent of it.

3. The third, or senior class, is composed of such persons as have had sufficient time and opportunity practically to prove the faith and manner of life practiced in the Society, and are thus prepared to enter fully, freely and voluntarily, into a united and consecrated interest. These covenant and agree to dedicate and devote themselves and services, with all that they possess, to the service of God and the support of the gospel forever, solemnly promising never to bring debt nor damage, claim nor demand, against the Society, nor against any member thereof, for any property or service which they have thus devoted to the uses and purposes of the institution. This class constitutes what is called church order, or church relation.

To enter fully into this order, is considered by the Society to be a matter of the utmost importance to the parties concerned, and therefore requires the most mature and deliberate consideration; for after having made such a dedication, according to the laws of justice and equity, there can be no ground for retraction. Nor can they, by those laws, recover any thing whatever which has been thus dedicated. Of this all are fully apprised before entering into the contract. Yet should any afterward withdraw, the Trustees have discretionary power to bestow upon them whatever may be thought reasonable, not on the ground of any just or legal claim, but merely as an act of charity. No person, however, who withdraws peaceably, is sent away empty.

Children taken into the order of the Church, are treated with care and tenderness. The government exercised over them is mild, gentle and beneficent, and usually excites in them those feelings of affection, confidence and respect towards their instructors which are not often found among other children, and generally produces a willing obedience

to whatever is required of them. The practical exercise of mildness and gentleness of manners, is early and carefully cultivated among them. All churlishness and moroseness of temper, all harshness of language, all rough, unfeeling behavior, all unkind and uncivil deportment, and all mischievous and wicked propensities, are cautiously watched and reprov'd. Great pains are taken to lead them into the practical exercise of truth, honesty, kindness, benevolence, humanity and every moral virtue. The duties of obedience to their instructors, respect to their superiors, reverence to the aged, and kindness and civility to all, are strictly enjoined upon them.

A good common school education is carefully provided for them, in which it is acknowledged that they generally excel children of their own age in the common schools of the country. Where traits of genius are discovered, their privilege of instruction, as occasion requires, is proportionably extended. They are early led into the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, instructed in their history, and practically taught the divine precepts contained in them, particularly those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. They are always brought up to some manual occupation, by which they may be enabled to obtain a livelihood, whether they remain with the Society or not.

During a period of more than forty years, since the permanent establishment of this Society, at New-Lebanon and Watervliet, there never has been a legal claim entered, by any person, for the recovery of property brought into the Society; but all claims of that nature, if any have existed, have been amicably settled to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. Complaints and legal prosecutions have not, hitherto, come from persons who brought property into the Institution; but from those who came destitute of property, and who, generally speaking, have been no benefit to the Society, in any way; but, on the contrary, after having enjoyed its hospitality, and brought no small share of trouble

upon the people, have had the assurance to lay claim to wages which they never earned, or property to which they never had any just nor legal claim.

No person can be received into this order until he shall have settled all just and legal claims, both of creditors and filial heirs ; so that whatever property he may possess, may be justly and truly his own. Minors cannot be admitted as covenant members of this order ; yet they may be received under its immediate care and protection. And when they shall have arrived at lawful age, if they should choose to continue in the Society, and sign the covenant of the order, and support its principles, they are then admitted to all the privileges of members. The members of this order are all equally entitled to the benefits and privileges thereof, without any difference made on account of what any one may have contributed to the interest of the Society. All are equally entitled to their support and maintenance, and to every necessary comfort, whether in health, sickness, or old age, so long as they continue to maintain the principles and conform to the orders, rules and regulations of the institution. They therefore give their property and services for the most valuable of all temporal considerations : an ample security, during life, for every needful support, if they continue faithful to their contract and covenant, the nature of which they clearly understand before they enter into it.

It may readily be seen, that such an order could not be supported, if its members, on withdrawing, should take whatever they have given, and have the avails of their labors restored to them. They have agreed to give it all to sacred and charitable purposes, claiming nothing but their own support from it. It has been disposed of according to their own desire ; and the institution may therefore be no better able to refund it, than if such a dedication had never been made. If, therefore, it should be returned to them, it would be literally taking it from those who remain faithful

to their covenant and giving it to covenant-breakers. Who cannot see that this would be both unreasonable and unjust ?

Notwithstanding all reports to the contrary, we confidently assert that no person has been wronged, by any dedication of property ever made to the purposes of this Society ; and that no person whatever, has any just or reasonable ground of complaint in this respect.

This Society has served as a pattern for all the Societies or branches of the community which have been established in various parts of the United States. In every place where the faith and testimony of the Society have been planted, the same orders and rules of government have been gradually established and maintained ; so that the Society and its members are now generally known ; and from the striking peculiarities which distinguish them from all other professors of Christianity, no person need be deceived by impostors.

The perpetuity of the Society is the last thing to be considered, on which we offer the following remarks :

We believe it will be generally granted, that the history of the world does not furnish a single instance of any religious institution which has stood fifty years without a visible declension of the principles of the institution, in the general purity and integrity of its members. This has been generally acknowledged by the devotees of such institutions, and facts have fully verified it. But we would appeal to the candid judgment of those who have known this institution from the beginning, and have had a fair opportunity of observing the progress of its improvement, whether they have, in reality, found any declension, either in the external order and regulations of the Society, or in the purity and integrity of its members, in the general practice of the moral and Christian duties ; and whether they have not, on the contrary, discovered a visible and manifest increase in all these respects. And hence they may judge for themselves, whether the moral character of the Society, and its progressive improvement, can be ascribed to any other cause

than the blessing, protection and government of Divine Power and Wisdom ; and why its perpetuity should be called in question.

Published in behalf of the Society, by

CALVIN GREEN, } *Committee of*
 SETH Y. WELLS, } *Publication.*

NEW-LEBANON, MARCH 15, 1830.

EXPOSITION CONTINUED,

IN WHICH SUNDRY INQUIRIES AND OBJECTIONS ARE STATED
 AND ANSWERED.

The following pages were written in the State of Ohio, and printed in a pamphlet with the preceding, under the superintendence of R. McNemar and D. Spinning, in 1832. As they will afford further information to the candid inquirer, they are now reprinted with a few corrections and amendments.

NOTWITHSTANDING much has been published for the information of mankind, relative to the faith and practice of the United Society of Believers ; yet we find many among the most candid and intelligent, who are still at a loss, and often anxiously, and we hope honestly, seeking further information, especially on matters of a practical nature. For the satisfaction of such, the following pages have been written ; and as truth is our object, we shall aim at presenting it in so plain a dress that it may be easily comprehended by persons of common capacity.

In the first place ; it is a question with many, whether this Society has for its primary object the things of this world, or that which is to come.

This question is, of all others, of the greatest importance, and ought to be first settled. It is strangely supposed, that if our main object were to prepare for a future state, we

would show a greater indifference about the things of time ; but instead of this, that we are as zealous to provide a good living, and to have every thing about us in the best order, and of the most durable quality ; hence we have been publicly denounced, as “ a set of worldly-minded, cunning deceivers.”

To this strange kind of reasoning we need only reply, that all our zeal in improving temporal things, and taking satisfaction in the enjoyment of them, will not prove that we have no greater enjoyments in prospect ; and we think, that the manner in which we use temporal things, may serve as positive proof, that we consider them of but little value, in comparison with the things of eternity.

Where is the man of the world that could be induced by anything earthly to confess all his most secret sins, and take up a full cross against all manner of sin and uncleanness in his knowledge, and live the life of self-denial that we live ? This single appeal may satisfy the conscience of any man, that nothing but motives purely religious can possibly induce any person to join this society, and perseveringly conform to its rules and orders.

1. *The confession of sins.* This, being the initiating act, opens a large field of inquiry, and some weighty objections, especially among Protestants, who have imbibed a disgust to almost every point of order held sacred by the Church of Rome. It is questioned whether the order of the gospel be, to confess to God alone, in general terms, or to name the particular acts, thing by thing, in the presence of witnesses appointed to hear, remit and counsel, as the case may be.

The idea of confessing to man, or of any man having power to forgive sin, is generally viewed by Protestants as the greatest presumption. But were it not for the abuses of this sacred order, by the Catholic Church, no Protestant, nor any other person of candor, could read the Scriptures attentively, and not see that an oral confession of sins, as established in this Society, was practiced both under the law and the gospel. The confession, if sincere, is indeed

made to God, and it is by his order that the penitent is released, and his sins forgiven him. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever ye retain, they are retained."

A striking evidence of the propriety and justice of this order of confession may be observed in mankind under various circumstances. A sinner, under deep tribulation and remorse of conscience, will often apply to some confidential friend, in whose piety and goodness he can safely trust, to unburden his mind, by laying open those crimes which occasion his remorse, and will often find relief in so doing. This is frequently the resource of awakened sinners on a dying bed. Criminals, also, under a just sentence of death, and expecting soon to be launched into eternity, will often make an open confession of their crimes, and seem to leave the world with much more peace of mind than they otherwise would have done. These things clearly show that there is a witness in the soul of man, implanted by the finger of God, to point out the true order of confession.

2. *Self-denial* comes next in order. The remission of sins that are past only serves to place the candidate on the ground of further trial. By bringing his deeds to the light, he sees what kind of a creature he is, and what he shall do with himself is now the question. The answer is, "Deny thyself." Can any thing be more objectionable? Self is the supreme object of every natural man; nothing so near and dear to him as himself; of course, to deny himself appears the greatest inconsistency imaginable. Hence it becomes a deep labor to reconcile the mind, in any degree, to a course so directly opposite to that of nature.

The candidate views and reviews his whole life, his actions and his principles of action, and compares them with their opposites now set before him in the precepts of the gospel and the example of believers; the infallible result of which, in every honest man, is self-abhorrence and sincere inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Take up thy cross," is the answer.

3. *The Cross of Christ* comes next into consideration. Here is the grand halting-place with the generality; they are unwilling to purchase salvation at so dear a rate. But to an honest soul there is no time to hesitate, no room for evasion or getting round the cross; no alternative but to make a full surrender, an entire sacrifice. It might, perhaps, be understood, that great latitude is given to the young believer, to hold and manage his own property, family, &c. It is only so considered after the manner of men; the faith of the gospel makes no reserve. Whoever denies self, denies all that belongs to self. The grand requisition to discipleship embraces "all that he hath." He himself is not his own, and what can he have that he can call his own?

Thus, the honest soul, having received the faith of the gospel, confessed his sins, denied himself, and taken up his cross, is placed on the proper ground of probation, to follow Christ in the regeneration; which leads to a further inquiry into those several steps which are considered more or less objectionable by the generality of mankind.

1. The first step which the believer takes, in conformity to the example of Christ, is to withdraw from the communion and fellowship of the world.—"Two cannot walk together except they be agreed."

The disagreement between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world is irreconcilable: therefore, the first step that goes to test our faith, is prompt obedience to the call of Christ, which ever was, is, and ever will be, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate." Hence begins the first order of the Society.

No consideration of an earthly nature can bind the believer to his former associates, nor separate him from the company of those to whom he is united in spirit.—The terms laid down by the Captain of our salvation are unalterable.—No worldly honor, no earthly interest, no natural affection, is taken for an excuse; but whatever cannot be adjusted and disposed of in an orderly manner, must be forsaken.—"If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father

and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Mat. x: 37.)

We have no system of rules to prescribe the form and manner of proceeding, in this matter; each individual acts according to circumstances. If there be a neighborhood of Believers, they are under no necessity of selling or forsaking their houses or lands, or deserting their families.

They establish their own rules of operation, and unbelievers rarely mix with them, unless it be to persecute and afflict them. Any that live remote, if they are not driven off, may take their time for settling their temporal concerns, and moving within the bounds of the Society. If they be single persons, they are accommodated in some of the families of Believers; those who have families move them somewhere near, if they be willing to come, and provide for them, if they are able; if not, they depend on their brethren for help.

When a family is divided, and part hold with Believers, and part with unbelievers, it furnishes occasion for many objections, which may all be answered in the words of Christ. "I am not come to send peace but rather division." (Luke xii: 51.)

2. When thus separated from the world, and located in the order of the Society, the next step is to test their union and relation to each other. Their first faith was to make a full and unreserved surrender to God, and it now remains to prove the sincerity of their dedication. If God is in heaven, and we upon earth, how is he to receive this dedication and surrender? This question is answered by Christ himself: Whatsoever ye do unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me.

The matter then is to regulate and adjust the general interest to the best advantage, for the mutual support and

benefit of all. This is a radical principle that pervades the whole concern, from its embryo to its greatest maturity, and holds a selfish nature to the cross in every arrangement that takes place.

The arrangement of persons, is a matter of the first importance, to organize them in family order, to assign to each individual the lot and place which he is best qualified to fill, and in which he can improve his talents to the best advantage. This, however wise and economical, is not without serious objection, particularly on the ground of disorganizing families, and dissolving the ties of nature. But those who esteem the gospel relation as the most valuable treasure, must gain it, though it be at the expense of those partial affections so highly prized by the children of this world.

3. When a family, in gospel relation, is thus constituted, the next inquiry is, what step is taken to arrange their temporal interest and mutual labors, so as to prevent confusion? What example has Christ given in this respect? Answer. In the first gathering of Believers, under the ministry of the Apostles, while they had all things common, there was cause of murmuring, till deacons were appointed to see that justice was done to all. According to this example, when property is united together and appropriated to common purposes, it is placed under the care and management of a deaconship, who are to be responsible for the same.

A covenant is entered into between the parties, in which the use and benefit of the property, and the services of all and each are freely devoted to the common support of the family; but to prevent fraud or imposition, no transfer of property is made to the deacons or to any other person.

As this order is merely probationary, the utmost caution is used to prevent imposition. Each individual who brings property with him, has it valued by disinterested men, takes an inventory of it signed by the appraisers, delivers it to the care and custody of the deacons, and if he should afterwards call for it, he receives it without interest, and gives a receipt and acquittance from all further demands.

The reasons for retaining this joint property on the ground of individual and separate claims, are to afford each a sufficient time of trial, and to secure a just settlement of all individual accounts. As long as there is any ground of claim upon the individual, his property remains in his own power, liable for his debts and other personal purposes. It is therefore in this order that all matters are adjusted relating to the settlement of property, all accounts settled with creditors, and donations given or appropriations made to heirs. But above every temporal consideration, it is here that the following lines begin to be realized :

Our flesh and sense must be denied,
 Passion and envy, lust and pride ;
 While justice, temp'rance, truth and love
 Our inward piety approve.—*Dr. Watts.*

Few objections are ever brought against the order of such a family, relative to their domestic economy ; but the case of the withdrawing members sometimes excites the tender sympathies of the world. For such to receive barely what they brought in ; no interest ; no wages ! How will this comport with the injunctions of Scripture, not to defraud the hireling of his wages ; or how will it bear the scrutiny of the laws of the land ?

Answer. We have ever, from the beginning, discarded the idea of hiring each other, or paying any wages to any member of the Society ; therefore, no objection can arise on the ground of defrauding a hireling ; and as for paying interest, it is pointedly prohibited by the moral law.

“ Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother, usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury.”—“ Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?” Mark the answer. “ He that putteth not out his money to usury.”

As for the laws of the land, they will be considered hereafter, in reference to a higher order, which is the next subject of inquiry.

4. The fourth and last step that is marked out for our

journey through time, is into Church order, where the spirits of men are to be tried as by fire, "and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Thess. iii : 13) ; their characters will be fairly tested, and their destiny for a future state decided. Every order short of this, is merely preparatory, and admits of some reserve ; but whoever advances into church relation, ought to calculate to make no reserve, and "to go no more out."—Rev. iii : 12. He must enter this order as Noah entered the ark, to ride the foaming billows of time, and terminate his voyage on the peaceful shores of eternity.

To this ark of safety the true Believer steadily and gradually progresses, making strait paths for his feet, until he arrives at the door of admission.

When a competent number have passed through a sufficient trial of their faith in the junior order, and are unitedly prepared to establish and support church relation, they have only to ratify and confirm their inward agreement by executing what is, by way of eminence, called the Church Covenant. Our limits will not admit of inserting this Covenant entire ; we shall therefore only state the outlines of its stipulations.

The parties solemnly announce their faith, and the object of their associating together in that order. They agree to live together as brethren and sisters of *one family*, possessing *one consecrated interest*, and equally enjoying the benefits of the same ; to conform to the order of the Church heretofore known and approved. The several orders of ministry, elders, deacons and trustees, and the duties of each are severally designated, as also the duties and obligations, rights and privileges of the members respectively. They further, in the most explicit terms, relinquish all claim to personal or private property, and wages for their services, and debar, not only themselves, but their heirs and assigns forever, from all private claims to the said consecrated interest, on account of any property or service which they may have contributed and bestowed, and jointly securing to all and each, the unmolested enjoyment of all those ben-

efits and privileges, spiritual and temporal during life, provided they perseveringly conform to the principles and rules of the institution.

The visible fruits of the Senior order are the best comment on its principles. The world have little to say but in admiration. Nor would the most penetrating eye discover, in all the arrangement, cause for complaint, or criminal charge without the help of a Judas, to misrepresent and falsify.

No trouble or calamity, worth naming, has ever arisen on this consecrated ground, but through the agency and instrumentality of those who violate their sacred engagements, renounce the faith, and demand reparation for the damages which they pretend to have sustained.

But as this is a subject of peculiar importance, we shall give it a distinct consideration.

THE CLAIMS OF APOSTATES CONSIDERED.

The case now under consideration having been briefly treated in the preceding part of this work, we shall continue the inquiry, under a general appeal to every rule of right, and see whether on any fair principle the community can be made liable for property so devoted, or labor performed under such conditions.

Let us, then, in the first place, inquire: Is it just and right to retain such donations, in the eye of the law?

The answer is clear, that if the law grants the liberty of bestowing a gift, it never can revoke the gift made under the sanction of that law; since all the blessings of a free government depend on the protection of life, liberty and the enjoyment of property; the right of using property righteously acquired, must, of course, be accounted one of its blessings. We boast of our constitution, and it expressly prohibits the enacting of any law which would impair any *bona fide* contract or agreement whatever.

When we undertake to prove that it is right, according to law, for any person (free from all incumbrances or law-

ful demands) to bestow his own property or services to any amount, and to whomsoever he sees fit, it seems like an undertaking to prove that two and two make four. The right to give alms and to make donations either in property or labor is guaranteed by the laws and usages of all nations. Landed property may, under some governments, be entailed, but even estates-tail are considered by us as inconsistent with the genius of a free republic; because the possessor of such estate is restrained in his disposal of it. Even in England, legal finesse is resorted to, to break the shackles which had been anciently imposed upon the right of giving away property as the proprietor of it pleases.

No one, we think, can seriously doubt of the legal right which every man in this country possesses, of giving away and receiving property according to the very order and manner practiced by the Church.

Another inquiry is raised on the ground of equity. Admitting it is consistent with the rules and maxims of law, will it comport with the pure principles of justice and equity?

Answer. In the first place, let us examine wherein there is, or may be a difference between law and equity. It may be supposed that the law, that is, our written or statute laws, are defective by reason of that universality of expression which nothing but a closer-going principle of equity can correct by reaching the minutest circumstance of every case. The written law cannot be made so explicit as to include in the strictest terms of expression, or fair implication, all that is necessary, in order to bring to justice the artful and designing, by tracing them through all their dark and crooked windings, and those subtle schemes which they invent to entrap and defraud the less artful or more honest.

A court is therefore instituted for the relief of such sufferers, and this is called a court of equity. In this court, the judge may decide according to evidence and the common or written law. Where there is no statute that will bear him through, he may select and apply the principles of common law to the case in hand; and where he can find none to suit,

he takes such as are most analogous, and, according to his own scrutinizing judgment, raises up a new principle, or correcting law, by which he decides the case. This important subject requires a serious attention, in order to discover its just merits.

The Church would be supposed to be so deeply interested that a righteous decision could not, from that quarter, be expected; and of course the withdrawing member, all his near relations, every other member who has left the Society, and every one who intends to leave it, are, by reason of their self-interest in the adjudication, incapable of being impartial. We have no alternative now left, but to look to those who are the least liable to be influenced by interest, and who, at the same time, are the most capable of understanding such matters. This will lead us directly to the court of equity, by reason of its superior advantages in obtaining the evidence of the facts as well as its extensive powers in gathering the opinions and judgments, the laws and usages of the wisest and best men who have lived for many ages past.

And what would, or what could, such a tribunal do in the present case? In this court, as well as all others, the decision must be given according to law and evidence.

Here the covenant is the evidence of the fact, that the withdrawing member did voluntarily give his property and services for the uses therein specified; and also that he therein promised never to make any charge or demand for the same.

Here the fact is clear and indisputable; and the court find that the common law secures to all sane persons, who are not under duress or constraint, the power of making such donations of property or of services, as they have a just claim to. The court of equity, therefore, as well as that of rigid justice, must and will decree that the donation was lawfully and rightfully made; and that the covenant by which the gift was secured is lawful and good, and that any act or decree that would disannull or make it void, would

be wrong and altogether immoral in its tendency, as it would, in effect, destroy all covenants or agreements, deeds and obligations; in short, that the whole foundation of social compact or intercourse between man and man would be swept away, and that breach of promise would no more be wrong.

Thus we see, by the authority that is deemed the most wise and most pure on earth, it is established, that it would not be right, but wrong, for the withdrawing member to break his vow, or make any demand for such consecrated service or property. Whence it follows of course, that whatever he can rightfully receive must be given to him, according to the provisions of the covenant, as a charity.

Most clearly then, any one losing his right of membership, by renouncing his faith and his former obligations of obedience, has no better claims to privileges, property or support, than those who never were members. But those, and those only, who acknowledge and obey the faith and doctrines of the gospel, and conform to the rules and orders thereof, are held in relation as members.

But in the next place, admitting that no law of man can reach the case, may it not be expected that for conscience toward God, remuneration will be made? We answer: All that conscience has to do in the matter is, to require the judgment to be honestly exercised to decide the case according to the best light, rule or law, which it may be in possession of. And as we have already seen what the decision would be of a conscientious judge, when guided by the best rules or laws among men; so there can be no propriety in appealing to conscience, unless she be allowed to have access to some acknowledged rule of judgment. Now to understand this last appeal fairly, the question is—What rule of judgment is to be considered as most binding on the moral sense or conscience of a Christian? It will be answered—The revealed will of God as recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Then “to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—Isa. viii: 20.

We will first mention the positive requirements under the law. One tenth of all their increase was to be consecrated ; in addition to this, every first born male of man and beast. These, with other positive requirements under the law, plainly show that God holds a claim to property and to persons too, for his special service.—And were those large donations ever credited to the donor, with any view to a recovery ?

But beyond positive requirements, there was an abundance of free-will offerings, which were encouraged and highly approbated. All vows and promises to dedicate to the service of God, either property or person, were approved and confirmed. And however they might, under the influence of the selfish principle, afterwards change their minds, they were never permitted to fail in the fulfillment of their sacred voluntary engagements. “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, he shall not profane his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Num. xxx : 2.) No provision here for any change of mind.

Now, what think ye, did Christ come to destroy the law or to fulfill it ? Did he teach his disciples to be more selfish, more penurious, or more tenacious of their property than had been customary ? Just the reverse.

The law by levying on a part, for the purpose of supporting union, only served as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, whose doctrine required an entire devotion of all that man had, and his own consecrated life into the bargain. Let him that readeth understand. “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke xiv : 33.)

Hence the example of the poor widow was so highly commended in putting into the treasury all that she had, even her whole living, although it was but about a farthing. For the gospel requires a full surrender to God, from those who profess it, and any one under the profession of obedience to the gospel, in full church relation, attempting to hold back a part of his property or services for self, may re-

member Ananias and Sapphira. And how could any one stand on any better ground who had solemnly and freely given up all, should he ever afterwards attempt to take back a part or the whole of what he had freely devoted? For any thing farther on this point, we refer to the ever memorable facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts iv: 32.)

Is there any evidence that aught of this property was ever reclaimed, or that there ever was an order of court, either in heaven or on earth, to repeal those gifts, and subject the Church to debt or damage for the same?

The result of this inquiry, then, is obvious; that conscience has no other concern in the matter, except to acquiesce in the principles of right established by all the aforesaid authorities, and decide accordingly.

Some, for mere evasion, have brought up the golden rule of doing to others as we would they should do to us; and as they would fondly apply it, we think a greater absurdity could not be invented. We are willing this rule should be applied to us in any rational point of view; it is that by which we square our conduct in all our transactions with mankind; but should we follow the ignis fatuus light of a self-interested apostate and his advocate, where would it lead us?

But what do we to others, that we would not that they should do to us? We covet no man's silver or gold, or property of any description; of course we wish them not to covet ours.—We demand nothing from any man to which we have not a lawful right, and why should we not repel an unlawful demand upon us? and as we punctually keep and fulfill our contracts; so we wish others to do. And though we vow to our own hurt, we change not. (See Psalms xv: 4.) And could we wish others to act differently? But should we at any time recant a fair bargain, and attempt by law to

force our opponent into a compliance with our covetous wishes, we would that the court should brand such a suit with infamy. Then let such be the result of all illegal claims against the Church, and all differences of opinion on this interesting subject will be fairly and impartially settled.

Here, we think, the argument might close; but one final objection, on account of serious minds, we shall consider, namely, that this final dedication is carrying the matter too far—further than the general sense of mankind will approve; consequently it renders the institution unpopular: whereas, by some little alterations in the Church covenant, permitting the withdrawing member to take back his property, and allowing him something for his labor, the institution might be more extensive and useful. Answer. Had we been set to contrive the plan, no doubt we should have adopted such views; but all we have had to do in the matter has been, to receive it as it has been originally constructed by higher authority.

But to obviate what Dr. Cleavland, of Kentucky, terms its “*odious unpopularity*,”* we would remark that every degree of the work of God that has ever been introduced among mankind has been *odiously unpopular* in its commencement. By consulting Dr. Lardner’s quotations from the book of Celsus, it will appear how unpopular Christ himself was in the early days of his ministry.

But so it is that every step in the travel of the Church towards her consummate glory, has been under an increasing cross. The circumcised Jew was *odiously unpopular* to the whole Gentile world, and Christians, as long as they maintained the circumcision of Christ, supported no better character in the esteem of a licentious world; from which the conclusion is evident, as it respects the finishing work of God in this latter day; that it must be by a full cross that the Church can possibly arrive at her consummate glory.

No one is compelled to bear such a cross; but when the

* See Unitarianism Unmasked.

time is fully come for *Zion to arise and put on her beautiful garments*, and a people are prepared to take up such a cross, is it consistent that God should suspend his purposes, and procrastinate his work, because it is likely to be *unpopular*, and but a few ready to approbate it ?

The *unpopular* few who choose to advance to the height of Zion, cannot interrupt any that choose to tarry on the plain of mere partnership and self-interest ; but as an apology for our holding fast what we have received, let us for a moment take a view of a society constituted on the *popular* plan.

Here all are equally prepared and invited to flock together ; the multitude must include whole families, old and young, rich and poor, weak and strong, with their several interests, talents and faculties. All go to work that are able and willing, and all derive their support from the joint stock, each has his property appraised, and his money and property, of course, going on interest.

Who, now, is to register those several sums, and calculate the annual interest, and keep book for a fair reckoning of loss or gain ? Who is sufficiently versed in arithmetic to calculate the days' works performed by this popular assembly, and make the proper deductions for boarding, washing, lodging, clothing, doctoring, and other necessary expenses ? all which must be done, if each is to retain his personal interest, and a legal and just settlement to be made.

And without such regular accounts, what sworn jury could *legally guess* what the annual labor of an individual was worth, or how much ought to be deducted for necessary and contingent expenses. But we leave it to those who have attempted the experiment, or may wish to establish a community on such a plan, to make the calculation. If, indeed, any one should attempt to apply the principle, and make the calculation, he would soon find that a united body of people could never stand on that ground ; because the selfish principle it would involve, and the difficulties and confusion it would occasion, would inevitably dissolve the institution.

But if any choose it, let them try the experiment. We have but one object in view, and that is to fulfill, in the most unequivocal manner, "all that the prophets have spoken" concerning the Church of God in the latter day.

And thus, after examining the subject on every side, it evidently appears that the unity, purity and perpetuity of the Church can never be gained and supported except upon those very principles upon which this institution is founded.

And here we shall close this subject, with a few passing remarks on this pure principle of self-denial, and impartial regard to the welfare of others—a principle which induces its subject to give, hoping for no remuneration in this world, and freely to exchange the selfish and contracted pleasures of time for the more sublime and exalted enjoyments for which man was created.

That such a principle does exist, and that wherever seen it ought to claim universal approbation, a few actions, under peculiar circumstances, seem to prove. A spirit of benevolence in doing good to the poor, in a man's hazarding his own life to save the life of his fellow creature, in his suffering toil and danger for his country's sake, without pecuniary reward; how are these things admired! How are such characters eulogized! What an immortal renown accompanies their names!

Of this truth we have a signal instance in George Washington. And what, pray, did he do, which constrains all to honor him? Why, he perseveringly endured privations and hardships; was faithful, zealous and enterprising in the cause in which he was engaged; refused pecuniary reward for his arduous services; and lastly, (and this crowned all,) he did not do what so many successful chiefs have done—he did not usurp the sovereign power when it was within his grasp, but resigned his commission and retired in peace. What is it, then, that calls forth unbounded and universal esteem, but a measure of self-denial, so conspicuous through the different parts of his public life as well as his private walks?

Here we see that God has a witness in every man's breast,

which is compelled to honor and approve of the principle of self-denial. How little soever they may exercise it, they are ready to testify its heavenly origin.

How must mankind feel when they come to see and know that the Church, as to its principles, is founded wholly on the doctrine of self-denial, and that it is built up entirely by the practice thereof. If one man should be induced, through friendship, to give up his own life to save the life of his friend, and do it deliberately, his fame would be sounded far and near, especially if that friend should be some person of note. But how must the world be confounded when all come to know that every simple cross-bearing believer, (and there are hundreds of such) is constantly in the actual work of laying down his earthly and sensual life for the sake of Christ, his *everlasting friend*. And can it be disputed that such are entitled, above all others, to the sure and certain hope of gaining a better and far more excellent life, according to the promise of Christ, his immutable friend, the Lord? "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." And again: "He that loveth his life, shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it to life eternal." —*Mark* viii. 35, and *John* xii. 25.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CHURCH COVENANT.

The following extracts are made from the written Covenant which was adopted and executed in the Church of the United Society in the year 1830. They show the essential object for which the Society was established, the manner in which the temporal interest of the Church is held, and the purposes for which it is used and appropriated by the Trustees. They also show the privileges enjoyed *by* and the duties required *of* the members for whose benefit the temporal concerns of the Society have been regulated and managed since the first establishment of this Institution.

ARTICLE II.—The great object, purpose and design of our uniting together as a Church or Body of people, in social and religious compact, is faithfully and honestly to occupy, improve and diffuse the various gifts and talents, both of a spiritual and temporal nature, with which Divine Wisdom has blessed us, for the service of God, for the honor of the gospel, and for mutual protection, support, comfort and happiness of each other, as brethren and sisters in the gospel, and for such other pious and charitable purposes as the gospel may require.

ART. III. *Sec. 1.*—The official Trustees of the Church are invested with power to take the general charge and oversight of all the property, estate and interest dedicated, devoted, consecrated and given up for the benefit of the Church; to hold in trust the fee of all lands belonging to the Church. And the said property, estate, interest, &c., shall constitute the united and consecrated interest of the Church, and shall be held in trust by the said Trustees, in their official capacity, and by their successors in said office and trust forever.

Sec. 2.—It is, and shall be the duty of the Trustees to improve, use and appropriate the said united interest for the benefit of the Church, in all its departments, and for such other religious and charitable purposes as the gospel may require; and also to make all just and equitable defence in law, for the protection and security of the consecrated and united interest, rights and privileges of the Church and Society, jointly and severally, as an associated community, so far as circumstances and the nature of the case may require. *Provided, nevertheless,* that all the transactions of the said Trustees, in the use, management, protection, defence and disposal of the aforesaid interest, shall be for the benefit and privilege, and in behalf of the Church or Society, as aforesaid; and not for any private interest, object or purpose whatever.

Sec. 3.—It shall be the duty of the Trustees to give information to the Ministry and Elders of the Church, of the general state of the temporal concerns of the Church and society committed to their charge; and also to report to said authority all losses sustained in the united interest thereof which shall come under their cognizance: and no disposal of any of the real estate of the Church, nor any important contract, shall be considered valid without the previous approbation of the authority aforesaid, to whom the said Trustees are, and shall at all times be, held responsible in all their transactions.

ART. VI. *Sec. 1.*—The united interest of the Church, having been formed and established by the free-will offerings and pious donations of the members respectively, from the commencement of the Institution, for the objects and purposes already stated, it cannot be considered either as a joint tenancy or a tenancy in common, but as a consecrated *whole*, designed for, and devoted to the uses and purposes of the gospel forever, agreeable to the established principles of the Church; therefore it shall be held, possessed and enjoyed by the Church, in their united capacity, as a sacred and covenant right; *that is to say*, all and every member thereof, while standing in gospel union, and maintaining the principles of this covenant, shall enjoy equal rights, benefits and privileges, in the use of all things pertaining to the Church, according to their several needs and circumstances; and no difference shall be made on account of what any one has contributed and devoted, or may hereafter contribute and devote to the support and benefit of the Institution.

Sec. 3.—As subordination and obedience is the life and soul of every well regulated community, so our strength and protection, our happiness and prosperity, in our capacity of church members, must depend on our faithful obedience to the rules and orders established in the Church, and to the instruction, counsel and advice of its leaders: *Therefore, we do hereby covenant and agree*, that we will receive and acknowledge as our Elders in the gospel, those members in the Church who are or may be chosen and appointed, for the time being, to that office and calling by the authority aforesaid; and also, that we will, as faithful brethren and sisters in Christ, conform and subject ourselves to the known and established faith and principles of our community, and to the counsel and direction of the Elders who shall act in union, as aforesaid; and also to all the orders, rules and regulations which are or may be given and established in the Church, according to the principles and by the authority aforesaid.

Sec. 4.—As the faithful improvement of our time and talents in doing good is a duty which God requires of man, as a rational, social and accountable being, and as this duty is indispensable in the members of the Church of Christ, therefore it is, and shall be required of all and every

member of this Institution, unitedly and individually, to occupy and improve their time and talents to support and maintain the interest of this Society, to promote the objects of this Covenant, and discharge their duty to God and each other, according to their several abilities and callings, as members in union with one common lead ; so that the various gifts and talents of all may be improved for the mutual benefit of each other and all concerned.

A FEW REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH COVENANT.

To show that the temporal interest held by the United Society, never was intended, nor can be appropriated to the wealth or personal aggrandizement of a few, or only a part of said Society, we submit the following summary of facts, to present the reader with a kind of synopsis of the general plan. And first : We most pointedly assert, that we have adopted the present mode of life, from the most conscientious motives and principles ; that our temporal interest is held in conformity to the order of the Primitive Church of Christ ; that this dedication does not end with the lives of those who thus dedicate it, but descends in perpetuity to a regular heirship, who can never apply it to any other purposes than those stipulated in our *constitution or covenant*. That the said instrument is equally binding upon all the members in these respects. The Ministry and Elders can exercise no control over said property, otherwise than to direct the disposal of it, according to the covenant ; personally, they hold nothing more than unofficial members. The Trustees only hold and manage the temporalities in trust ; and are as responsible for their conduct as any other member. But these temporal arrangements, however economical, fall far short of unfolding the inward principle by which the concern is managed. The most important consideration which leads us to be so explicit on these points, is to regulate public opinion, by offering everything on the subject that may tend to inform or edify. And we should think that a very moderate portion of discernment might enable any unbiassed mind to discover that such a devoted, self-denying life as is led by

the devotees of this institution has but very few charms for abstracted worldly-minded, wealth-accumulating mortals, for those who are truly greatest amongst us, are *the least of all and servants of all*. The truth is, our kingdom is not from hence, and we only consider the things of this life of secondary importance, and think it duty to “use the things of this world as not abusing them, for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

To show the light in which our church covenant has been viewed in courts of justice, in these days of generous freedom, we will close with a brief extract from a speech of the Honorable John Brethett, of Kentucky :

“And is it matter of objection against any man, that his motives are so pure and disinterested, that he desires to be released from earthly thralldom, that he may fix all his thoughts and affections on his God? After they have signed the covenant, they are relieved from earthly care.

“Much has been urged against Shakerism, much has been said against their covenant. But, sir, I repeat it, *that* individual who is prepared to sign the Church covenant, stands in an enviable situation; his situation is, indeed, an enviable one, who, devoted to God, is prepared to say of his property—Here it is, little or much, take it, and leave me unmolested to commune with my God. Indeed, I dedicate myself to what? not to a fanatical tenet? Oh no! to a subject far beyond—to the worship of Almighty God, the great Creator and Governor of the universe! Under the influence of his love, I give my all: Only let me worship according to my faith, and in a manner I believe acceptable to my God.

“Now, what is there objectionable in all this? I say again, the world cannot produce a parallel to the situation which such a man exhibits. Resigned to the will of Heaven, free from all the feelings of earthly desire, and pursuing, quietly, the peaceful tenor of his way.”





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