

TAKEN FROM
THE HERALD OF THE KINGDOM AND AGE TO COME

By John Thomas, M.D, 1854

MAN IN SOCIETY,

BY THE EDITOR.

MAN, in the history of his race, presents himself to our notice in two states—the social and the savage. The social is his original condition; the savage, that into which he has sunk as a consequence of licentiousness. At his formation, Man, who was made male and female, was pronounced “very good;” and appointed to live in society, because it was “not good for him to be alone.” The primeval society of Eden was constituted of divine and human elements—of God, the Elohim, man and woman: of God, “whom no man hath seen;” of the Elohim, whom he hath often seen; and of man and woman, the perfection of flesh and blood. This social state was free and devoid of evil; yet was its liberty not absolute, but restrained and regulated by law. Though “very good” and undefiled by sin, man was not permitted to do as he pleased without restriction. A law was given to him by his Creator, expressive of the divine sovereignty over society, and his position in the social state. Hence, society is a divine institution, originally characterized by intelligence, goodness, law and liberty. Woman belonged to man, because she was his own flesh and bone, and given to him of God; and they both belonged to God, because He had formed them for himself. Society, therefore, belongs to God; so that whosoever hath the honor of membership therein is free to do whatever he pleases that is not contrary to the letter and spirit of His law. This is the liberty God permits in society, which is his. Beyond this man must not go if he would continue in the divine favor. Law is the boundary line between liberty and licentiousness. He that crosses it diabolizes, and takes the first step in the descent, which terminates in the anarchy of the savage state.

From the constitution of society, then, at the foundation of the world, we see that law was an essential element of the social state; and that social liberty is freedom restrained by law. Absolute liberty, or freedom unrestrained by law which defines “order” and “decency,” has no place in the divine plan. Man aimed at this. He virtually asserted, that he had a right to do what he pleased with the Tree of Knowledge as with all other trees; but experience at length proved to him that he had no unconditional rights; but a right only to do according to the law. He did as he pleased, and in consequence lost the favor of God, as will all others who pursue a similar course.

The existence of society depending upon the maintenance of law, it behooves all intelligent and wise people to cooperate to that end. If flesh were not sinful, or if all men were wise and good, the knowledge of the requirements of the divine law would be sufficient. They would know and do. But flesh is sinful, very sinful; and all men in society have not intelligence, nor faith sufficient to walk by, nor wisdom, nor a love of order, nor a sense of decency; therefore, a simple knowledge of what God requires in society, or a simple reference to what the law says, is not enough to answer the necessities of the case. Law cannot apply itself, it must, therefore, be placed in the hands of an administration, that lawlessness may be restrained, and decency and order maintained in society.

The savage state is the opposite to the social in every particular. The “philosophy” of the Gentiles, “falsely so called,” teaches that the savage is the original condition of man; and that society has grown up out of it as a result of necessity. One who believes the Bible, however, discards this as mere foolishness. Divinely constituted society is the primeval state; and savage life the extreme consequence of a departure from its laws. It originated in transgression of God’s law, or sin, which, before the flood, acquired such force as entirely to corrupt the way of the Lord, and to fill the whole earth with violence. Its career was similar after that catastrophe; and where it was not antagonized by divine interference, but allowed in its fleshly inworking and manifestation to acquire absolute sway in portions of the human race, it reduced them to the condition of the natives of New Holland and the Feejees. The “liberty” of these aborigines is absolute. They do what is right in their own eyes upon the principles of “liberty and equality” in the abstract. They are without law to God, and know no rule but the necessity of their own lasts. They are nature’s freemen, democrats of the largest liberty, who, under the impulse of desire, edify themselves without regard to the sensibilities and wishes of the unfortunates who fall into their hands.

This is the extremity arrived at by the uncontrolled working of that principle called “sin in the flesh.” Cannibalism, however, is but the extreme manifestation of that “liberty” contended for by some, which impels them to a gratification of their own selfishness and vanity at the expense of the order and decency of the social state. The latter is sin modified in its display by circumstances, which restrain it by present consequences from murder and theft; but leave it rampant in the manifestation of “hatred, variance, jealousies, wraths, strifes, divisions, sects, envyings,” which, though thought little of by the carnally-minded, as effectually exclude from the Kingdom of God. (Gal. v. 19-21)

Now, by comparing the savage and social conditions of man, it will be perceived that, in his transition from the savage to the social state, he sacrifices, as he ascends the scale of being, more and more of what the natural man calls “his liberty.” The nearer his approximation to primeval excellence, the more is the liberty of the flesh restrained, and reduced to a minimum. Between society divinely constituted, and the purely savage state, there are many intermediate social conditions. Greek, Mohammedan, Papal, and Protestant Socialisms, are sin, or the flesh, variously displayed—incorporations, in other words, of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” in which the works of the flesh are manifested with little rebuke. It is for this cause that they are glorified by the multitude which is religiously tolerant only of that which condemns “what they have no mind to.” Still we see in these barbarisms the liberty, or rather licentiousness of the savage state considerably retrenched. Law and legal administration are recognized and obeyed; for experience has proved that without these, human society cannot exist.

The practices tolerated in the ecclesiastical organizations of the world, cannot be permitted in a society constituted of God. Variance, jealousies, strifes, envyings, and so forth, must be abstained from. No member of such a society is at liberty to indulge in these, or in any thing tending to them. The law of love that proceeds forth of Zion positively and absolutely forbids them. The savage, the barbarian, the Papist, the Protestant, are free to serve sin; but not so the Christian; he is free Only to serve righteousness, as a humble and faithful servant to God, who esteems that man most highly who is the least subservient to the lusts, passions, and instincts of the flesh. Therefore it is written: “Mortify [or put to death] your members which are upon the earth;” “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.” “Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as

wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” “Be ready to every good work; speak evil of no man; be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness with all men ;” and “Let all things be done unto edifying.”

Absolute liberty, which is licentiousness, does not belong to God’s society. The members of it surrender some of their individuality for the benefit of the whole, of which each person is a very small part. This is a first principle, and there can be no society without it. Now, that portion of individuality which each foregoes, he transfers from himself to the functionaries of society in assenting to their appointment, or in applying for admission, and in being received, into a community where they exist; so that he consents that he has no right to do individually what pertains to them officially. Functionaries, then, are the acting members of the body, administering to its social requirements—its eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet; while the body in which they are placed itself is constituted of the generality of its constituents.

These things being understood, there will be no difficulty in comprehending those which more especially pertain to what is commonly termed “a church.”

A church is a society constituted upon principles divinely revealed. It is a company of believers organized for the worship of God, the support of the truth, and their mutual benefit. Union is strength; but there must be union in fact, or association is incorporate weakness. It is not good for Christians to be alone; therefore it is a privilege and a blessing for those who are partakers of the divine nature to be together in society. They afford the truth a local standing; they give it utterance, minister to its necessities, encourage one another, and assist the poor.

Baptism organizes believers of the gospel of the kingdom into the One Body of the Lord. In the beginning, this consisted of 120 persons, with the twelve apostles as their eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet; their eldership, in short, which comprehended all their office- bearers, who attended to the ministry of the Word, and to the serving of tables. When the 3,000 were added to this Church, they continued under the apostles’ sole administration of things spiritual and temporal, until the seven assistants were added to the twelve, to relieve them of the secular concerns. Deacons, therefore, were not essential to primitive church organization, seeing that they were only added to meet the exigences of the case which arose some time after the day of Pentecost. The apostolic eldership was infallible, having been imbued with the Spirit from on high, which guided them into all truth, and made them what they were. Their administration was, therefore, the “ministration of the Spirit,” by which each of them was endowed with the “word of wisdom,” “the word of knowledge,” “faith,” “the gifts of healing,” “the working of miracles,” “prophecy,” “discerning of spirits,” “kinds of tongues,” and “the interpretations of tongues.” This was the Model Church, which was of one heart and one soul, and great grace was upon them all.

The churches among the Gentiles were formed after this model; that is, with an eldership or presbytery embodying the spiritual gifts. These gifts were not common to all the baptized, but to those only which constituted the eldership; and, perhaps, the deacons, who may be indicated as the “helps.” Those who had the spiritual gifts were the spiritual men, or “members” of the body “in particular.” The elderships of the churches, however, differed from the Jerusalem church, in that each particular elder did not possess all the nine gifts, as did each apostle; but only some of them. The gifts were distributed among several for the profit of the whole body. These supernaturally endowed persons, by the particular gifts they had received, were constituted “apostles” of churches, “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors,” and “teachers.” They were all elders, but of different orders.

Apostles ranked first; the prophets next; then the teachers; and after them the helps and governors; so that the ruling elders occupied the lowest rank in the eldership, and acting, therefore, under the direction of the ministers of the word; yet, though these diversities obtained, they were exhorted to have the same care one for another.

It was the function of these elderships to edify the body of Christ. In other words, the body edified itself through these “members in particular,” who constituted in each society the branched candlestick of the church. The unction of the Spirit burned in them, shining as lights, holding forth the “word of truth.” All these gifts worked that one and the self-same Spirit, “dividing to every man severally as He willed.” The gift most to be desired was that of “prophecy,” or the faculty of speaking by inspiration to the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the hearers. The eldership had a plurality of prophets, who might all prophesy in the meeting, provided they did so without confusion. The Corinthians were desirous of “spirits,” that is, of spiritual gifts, by which they might be distinguished. They appeared to have desired the gift of tongues above all others; but the Apostle exhorts them to desire that of prophecy: and whatever they acquired, to seek the acquisition of it, that they might excel to the edifying of the church.

From this brief outline, it is evident that democracy had no place in the apostolic churches of the saints. The Holy Spirit constituted certain of the saints overseers, that they might feed the flock of God, and minister to all its necessities, as the pillar and support of the truth. As the prophets and teachers were ministering in the church at Antioch, the Holy Spirit said to them: “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” In this way the rulers and instructors of the body were appointed by the Spirit, and not by the brethren at large. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the eldership, and the brethren in general, were the elements of God’s society in apostolic times. The Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit, through the eldership, was the authority established in the church. Democratic republicanism would have been subversive of this; and, if tolerated, would have produced confusion and every evil work. The authority of the people and the authority of God cannot coexist. All things of God, and as little as possible of man, is a principle characteristic of the social state originating from heaven, in Eden, in Israel, and in the church. Decency and order can only be maintained by the authority divinely appointed and sustained by the wise and good. This cooperation suppressed turbulence, and put to silence the foolish talking of the wise in their own conceits, who thought more highly of themselves than they were entitled to.

The respect and consideration that was due to the elders is clearly set forth in the Epistles. “We beseech you, brethren,” says Paul, “that ye know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and that ye esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” Again: “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. Obey them, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you. Salute them all.”

On the other hand, the elders are exhorted to “feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; nor for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind neither as being lords over the heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the

proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

After the manner of these exhortations were decency and order maintained in the churches of the saints; yet even with this divinely constituted authority, the heady and highminded could scarcely be restrained. It was the ministration of the Spirit, not in word only, but in power; yet evil found admission, and became “the Mystery of Iniquity, secretly working.” The power could punish, and did punish, even unto the infliction of disease and death, and could also pardon and heal the penitent. It was evidently, however, not exercised to the full, but with considerable longsuffering, and forbearance; though, in many instances, it was pushed to extremities, as a terror to the evilly disposed.

Now, to this point I have endeavored to show:

First, that the social was the original condition of man, on the principle that it is not good for him to be alone.

Second, that in this state he was free, yet subject to law, which is an essential element of society.

Third, that social liberty is defined by law, by which it is prevented from degenerating into licentiousness, which is liberty unrestrained by law.

Fourth, that as law cannot apply itself, an administration must necessarily exist.

Fifth, that man in society must needs surrender some of his natural or individual liberty for social protection from those who may be stronger than he, and for the general good.

Sixth, that office-bearers constituting the administration are representative of that portion of each member’s individuality surrendered for social need.

Seventh, that these principles were incorporated in the churches of the saints established by the apostles.

Eighth, that the churches of the primitive age were constituted by the apostles and evangelists, who, having gathered the baptized believers of the kingdom’s gospel into distinct societies, ordained elders in them, who being qualified for the discharge of their several duties of teaching, feeding, ruling, and serving, by spiritual gifts, were therefore constituted by the Holy Spirit.

Ninth, that the elderships were the many branched lamps in which the holy oil, or spirit, burned for the illumination and wellbeing of the generality.

Tenth, that the existence of these spiritual elderships necessarily excluded from the church what, in modern times, is styled democratic republicanism.

Eleventh, that the principle upon which all church affairs were conducted is expressed in the sayings, “let all things be done to edifying;” and, “let all things be done decently and in order;” and “let all your things be done with love,” And,

Twelfth, that the churches edified themselves through their elderships, which were composed of “members in particular;” that is, of members selected from the “multitude,” according to specified conditions.

One thing, then, is evident, from a review of the premises before us, and that is, that there is no ecclesiastical organization extant like that which we see existed in the apostolic age, and that of the elders who outlived the apostles. And, furthermore, that however intelligent and excellent of purpose

and character certain Christian professors may be, they could not by any unanimity establish one. The reason of this is, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is a wanting: then, the Spirit called believers, and qualified them for the eldership, and through it instructed and ruled the body; but now, the Holy Spirit is neither in elderships nor people; at all events, neither of them afford any evidence of the fact, being more conspicuous for want of wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding, than for the possession of them.

But, because we cannot have the ancient order which existed in the infancy and childhood of Christianity, (for which, indeed, it was specially designed,) is that any reason why, when “a measure of an age of the fulness of Christ” has been attained, and the ancient order discontinued, believers in society should have no order at all; but that A. B. and C., however incompetent in the estimation of all but themselves, should be at unrestrained liberty to violate all the principles embodied in that ancient order, and to set all the rules of courtesy and good breeding at defiance? Certainly not. This is anarchy, and utterly disruptive and subversive of the social state. Men cannot live in society, literary, political, domestic, or Christian, where such licentiousness prevails. There must be system, and such an one, too, as shall be a restraint upon the presumptuous, and a praise to them that do well.

Seeing, then, that the divinely constituted order of things is not attainable, and some organization must be established if believers are to cooperate in society, it evidently follows, that the God of wisdom, knowledge and love, has left it to the most intelligent, wisest, and best dispositioned of His sons, to devise a system embodying the principles of His ancient order, through which may be carried out most effectually His benevolence to His children and the world. The case of Moses and his father-in-law establishes this. God had said nothing to Moses respecting the daily judging of the people, which all rested upon his shoulders, to the certain injury of his health. Jethro perceived this, and, though not an Israelite, suggested a division of labor, in the appointment of “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness,” who should be rulers with him, to judge the people at all seasons. “If thou do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure.” Moses took the advice; and though it is not written that God approved it, yet, as Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, we are justified in concluding that he did; for Moses would have established nothing contrary to His will, nor, if established, would it have been permitted to continue. We are in the wilderness state, and in a somewhat similar position. God has removed the divinely constituted elderships, or branched candlesticks, and permitted his heritages to be despoiled and scattered. We are endeavoring to gather the dispersed together in divers places; but, in doing so, we find the times vastly changed. We are here and there companies, who profess to believe the same gospel as Paul preached, and, like him and his associates, to have obeyed it. We desire to be organized, but the Holy Spirit neither calls any of us to office, nor bestows on us any special gifts. If he prescribe to us no organization for modern times, and he have cut us off from access to the ancient one, it is manifest that, if we are to organize at all, we must do as Moses did at Jethro’s suggestion, and organize ourselves, if God command us so; and we infer he does, as he has not told us how to organize, yet exhorts through the apostle “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

It might be objected here that this reasoning would sanctify all the ecclesiastical organizations of Christendom. But I say, no; because, in the first place, they are not organizations of Christians, their members never having obeyed the gospel, so that they are not Christian organizations; and, in the next place, the organizations do not embody the principles of the apostolic one. No organization can be acceptable to God which is not comprehensive of his children; while, on the other hand, I believe

he would not be displeased at any system of rule and order they might devise promotive of their own improvement of heart and understanding and growth in faith, humbleness of mind, brotherly kindness and love; and which would enable them to support the truth, and sound it out effectively in the world; all of which premises that their system embody the principles inculcated in the Word.

Who then should initiate the organization of unassociated believers? I should answer, in view of Paul's instructions to Titus, He or they who have been instrumental in opening their eyes, and in turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. It is reasonable that he who has been able to do this, is more competent to "set in order the things that are not done, and to ordain elders," than any one or all of the proselytes put together. He has in the nature of things more scriptural intelligence than they, seeing that they had been blind until he happily enabled them to see. The democratic mode of setting things in order, and ordaining elders, has been abundantly tried, and found wanting. It results in every evil work, and in all presumption and confusion. The vote of the majority puts men into office who are unqualified in every particular; and history shows that wherever this principle has rule in church or world, it invariably introduces turbulence, contempt of authority, and corruption; so that at length reaction necessarily supervenes for the prevention of the disruption of society which would otherwise certainly ensue.

The things Titus had to "set in order" were the prophets, teachers, helps, governments, &c., which "God had set in the churches" according to a certain order. See 1 Cor. xii. 28. In doing this he constituted an eldership for the edifying of the body in love. If it were necessary that these men should have certain natural, social, domestic, logical, and doctrinal prerequisite qualifications, in addition to the gifts of the Spirit, to enable them to rule well, and to edify the body; how much more, important in the absence of those gifts, as in these times, that the office-bearers now should be men of wisdom, knowledge, holiness of life and disposition, courteous, and well bred! Timothy was ordered "not to lay hands suddenly upon any man;" and to let the deacons be tried before they were made permanent. This must be attended to now. The best men and the wisest must form the Wittenagemot of the church; which indeed ought itself to be as a whole an assembly of wise men; but experience unhappily proves that such a condition is the rare exception to the rule. If all the members of a church were intelligent, wise, disinterested, and wholly devoted to the truth, the elder, overseer, or bishop's office would be a ruling and teaching sinecure; but this was not the case in the apostles' day, and it is much farther from being the case now. Men are more knowing than wise and prudent in all ages; and in proportion to their untempered knowledge and self-esteem, disposed to glorify and exalt themselves. The folly and turbulence and conceit of this class, which abounds in all communities, makes it particularly necessary that the very best men a church can afford should be appointed to its oversight.

As all things, then, must have a beginning, it appears to me that the names of brethren of the class indicated by Paul might be unanimously inscribed on a list by the members of the church, and be handed to him who called them out of darkness, that he might acquaint himself with them, and see which of them it would be advisable to leave upon the list for election. If two elders were needed, four or more good, apostolically characterized men might be inscribed on the list presented, which might be reduced, or not, according to the judgment formed of their eligibility by the scrutator who enlightened them. He might perhaps reduce the list to three. Two pieces of paper might then be each labelled, "For Elder," and put into a receiver with a third piece which should be blank. The three brethren should then successively put in the hand, and take one, upon which they of course who drew the labels would be elected, not by the people, nor by the scrutator, but by the lot. This appears to me to be as near as we can come to a scriptural election; and I cannot but think, that

“able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness,” so elected, would be approved by the Lord himself if present; and would certainly be deserving of all that respect and consideration the Scriptures claim for those who supervise the church. Brethren who would not submit to such men in the Lord should seek society elsewhere. A congregation’s spiritual affairs might be safely confided to them, for all their endeavors would be to promote the welfare of their brethren, to diffuse the knowledge of the truth, to maintain order and decency, and to glorify the Father who is in heaven. But, if any better mode could be devised, all reasonable and truthful men would be ready to adopt it.

In some churches there are few that can speak; in others, there are many. As a general rule, brethren should be “swift to hear, and slow to speak;” for there are very few who can speak to the edification of any besides themselves. Some mistake talking for prophesying or speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort. They talk at their brethren, to the greatest annoyance of those who listen to them, who, after they have done, are thankful, and feel no disposition to say, “Amen.” These are “unruly talkers, whose mouths must be stopped,” and it is the duty of the elders to do it; and to see that the time and patience of their brethren and the public are not unprofitably consumed by such. There is no worship in talking; and it should be remembered that a church convenes for worship and instruction, not to listen to unprofitable and random talk. James says, “be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive a severer scrutiny. For we the whole miss many things. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” Let then those who desire to hear their own voices, read the exhortations of the apostles, and add few words, if any, of their own, unless they have prepared themselves as workmen rightly to divide the word of truth when they who rejoice in the truth will hear them gladly. He is a wise man who, with a small intellectual and scriptural capital, speaks few words; but shallow waters make a great noise; and so it too often comes to pass that they who have the least depth are the most prolific of wordiness and volubility. Speech seasoned with salt is excellent; but if it have no savor, it is fit only to be cast away as unprofitable and vain.

In a word, then, decency and order must be maintained; and, as far as I am individually concerned, I will identify myself with no organization of believers in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints that does not purge itself from the licentiousness which maintains the right of every man doing what is right in his own eyes, to the gratification of himself, at the expense of the inoffensive, and to the injury of the truth.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

IN the preceding article I have shown, in the first place, what was the divine order of things in the heritages of God planted by the apostles, and ordained by them and the evangelists; and in the next place, how nearly this might be approximated in the Nineteenth Century. But it is much more easy to sketch out the plan of a solid, and substantial, and elegant fabric, than to build it; much depends upon the nature of the foundation, and the materials to be used. If the edifice be not laid in rock, and the materials be more effluent of the flesh than of the spirit, however admirable may be the plan, the structure will prove like the apples in Milton’s hell, beautiful to the eye, but ashes between the teeth.

No organization, not even an apostolic one, can work well, that is, scripturally, which is not composed of elements more zealous for the advancement of the truth, and the promotion of the glory of its divine Author, than of their own notions and exaltation. The first necessary thing is, that

the members shall have become as little children, having their old Adam subdued by faith, and Christ substituted in his place by the same principle. Without this disposition, which is “peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy,” no organization could work harmoniously and efficaciously, though framed and administered by the apostles themselves. Even a bad organization with good materials would work better than a good one with a self-willed, heady, factious, and self-glorifying people. The members must all respect the apostolic teaching if they would have an organization that would be scriptural and satisfactory to all good men. This teaching says, “By love serve one another.” “Be not desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.” “Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” “Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel,” “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let his mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” “Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which (peace) also ye are called in one body; and be thankful.” “Be at peace among yourselves.” “Be all of one mind, having compassion one of another: love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” “Let love be without dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another. “And the great teacher, even Christ, who, though the Lord of all, humbled himself and became the servant of the least, enstamps this doctrine with the seal of his authority, saying, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

A people imbued with such doctrine as this would make work well; and indeed would get along peaceably together without any written constitution at all; because peace, and righteousness, and the law of the spirit of life, would be written in their hearts and minds. A people so disposed is the great want of our age — a people who not only believe the gospel of the kingdom, but manifest the fruit of it in their walk and conversation, to wit, “righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” It is the extreme scarcity of such that make it almost impossible to plant heritages in the land with administrations even remotely approximating to the apostolic. An association of believers is better without an eldership, than to have one made up of persons destitute of the qualifications indicated in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. All who have obeyed the gospel are not “blameless,” “watchful,” “decorous,” “given to hospitality,” “apt to teach,” “of a well regulated mind,” “judicious rulers of their own house”, and of good external report. These qualifications are as necessary as faith and obedience to the gospel; and in order that their aptness to teach may be beneficially exercised, it is necessary that “the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom.” Persons thus qualified would preside over an association of believers with great advantage all to concerned. These were the sort of persons the apostles exhort us to obey; but before we can do what they require in the premises, the right persons must be manifested. They do not exhort us to obey the incarnations of accident, or of majorities, or of party feeling; but only such as the Holy Spirit makes overseers- “able men, such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness.” They should be wise, not in their own conceits; this the apostle forbids: but wise in the estimation of those that be wise, and disposed to avail themselves of their services. The greatest amount of the knowledge of divine things possessed in these days is but little at best. How very minute, then, that which is little compared with this! and how little ability is there to use this small amount aright! A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It

puffs up, and “lifts up with pride,” or inordinate self-esteem. It is expedient, therefore, that a newly-formed ecclesiastical association should enter upon such an arrangement as would give expression probationally to the principles set forth; that being taught by experience they may be the better able to judge of measures and of the fitness of individuals to carry them into effect with permanence.

Now, a necessity, forced by circumstances upon certain believers of the gospel, has compelled them to initiate an organization which shall favor, as they believe, the congregational worship of God in spirit and in truth, and the dissemination of “the word of the kingdom” in the city of New York. They have entered upon this arduous enterprise without conference with flesh and blood. They have seen and felt the necessity that exists, and have responded to it in the fearlessness of faith, the love of peace, the admonition of the truth, and the fear of God. It is an olive branch to all who love the truth better than themselves, but affords no scope for the unhallowed ambitions of the flesh. Approbating the principles set forth in the article entitled “Man In Society” and these “Additional Remark”, they have agreed to the following constitution, as meeting the demands of the probational situation in which they are placed. It is published here for the benefit of all who may be interested in the subject of “Church Organization,” which has been for many years a cause of much trouble to the professed friends of truth both in Britain and America. Unhappily, in modern times, about the first thing neophytes begin to do is to join battle with somebody about church government, instead of adding to their faith “goodness, and knowledge” of the divine testimony, that they may grow thereby, and become men, able to contend earnestly and valiantly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Infinitely more scriptural would it be for such to do this, than to consume their time and energies in striving against each other about place and power. A man thoroughly imbued with the truth would rather avoid these in this age than seek them. The least intrinsically deserving and qualified are, for the in most part, those who aspire after the petty distinction of place, being rarely capable of illustrating their position by the fruit of faith. They forget that we are placed here to learn obedience by the things we are called to suffer; not to “learn how to rule;” though to obey with a good grace is the first step to the commanding righteously the obedience of others. But, not to dilate more upon this point, which ought to be obvious to all, I proceed without further comment to lay before the reader the

CONSTITUTION OF THE ROYAL ASSOCIATION OF BELIEVERS IN NEW YORK.

1.—THE NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION.

In the age contemporary with the apostles “Christian” was a name unappropriated by any religionists, other than the true believers who were “first called Christians at Antioch.” But in the nineteenth century, this is not the case. Every ecclesiastical association in “Christendom,” from “the Mother of Harlots” to Mormonism, the most recent of her Babylonish and adulterous generation, now appropriates the once distinctive and unblemished appellation to itself. For this reason, we conclude not to attempt to distinguish our Association by a name so universally misapplied; differing also, as we do, so essentially in faith and hope from all modern “Christian” names, sects, and denominations.

The "one faith" and "hope" we confess as "the children of the kingdom," are royal. We believe in a Messiah, even Jesus, who shall subdue unto himself, and for his brethren, a royalty, bounded only by "the uttermost parts of the earth;" in which royalty we hope to participate, when, as Micah testifies, The first dominion shall come to the stronghold of the daughter of Zion; and the kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem." The apostle Peter, in writing to his Christian brethren dispersed through the provinces of Asia Minor, who also believed in this royalty, saith, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that ye should publish the goodness of him that hath called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Besides this, the Apocalypse affirms that the Lord Jesus has made such "kings and priests, for God to reign upon the earth;" and adds in another place, "They sat upon thrones, and judgment was given unto them: and they lived, * * * and they shall be the priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Seeing then that it is fit that a society, or association, of whatever kind, should have a designation, and deprecating strongly the imposition of a name by which we should be characterized as the adherents of any person, however esteemed; we agree that the title of our confederacy shall express the great subject-matter of the gospel, i.e. ROYALTY. Our decision, therefore, is that our ecclesiastical union shall be entitled "THE ROYAL ASSOCIATION OF BELIEVERS* in New-York.

2. —THE ASSOCIATION DEFINED.

The Association is an aggregation of persons who believe "the things" covenanted to Abraham and to David, "concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ," and have therefore been "immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

3.—OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, whose scriptural position is defined in No. 2, DO HEREBY confederate ourselves into a visible association, for the weekly remembrance of the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread; for the celebration of the high praises of God; for the reading of the Scriptures; for the support and proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom; and for mutual assistance in time of need.

4.—WHO ARE INVITED TO MEMBERSHIP.

"The wisdom from above being first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" —we cordially invite all immersed believers of the gospel preached to Abraham, Israel, and the Gentiles, by the Angel of Jehovah, Moses, Jesus, and the apostles, who are disposed to illustrate this "wisdom from above" in word and deed, to unite with the undersigned for the purposes set forth in No. 3.

* This title is nearly equivalent to the Scripture phrase "ROYAL PRIESTHOOD," used by Peter; that is, A Royal Order of Priests. "Royal" is a French word, from roi, a king. Anything pertaining to a king is royal. Hence an Association composed of "children of the kingdom," who are "sons of God," and therefore brethren of Jesus Christ, Jehovah's first born and Israel's King, believing also the glad tidings of the kingdom, is royal; and therefore named as in the text above.

5.—WHO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP WITHOUT MEMBERSHIP.

Being the Lord's table, and not the table of the Association, all of good report within the city or without it, who, believing the gospel of the kingdom, have been immersed, are cordially invited to worship with us; the only privileges withheld being a participation in the direction of our affairs, and speech without previous invitation.

6. — WHO ARE INADMISSIBLE TO MEMBERSHIP.

"The kingdom of God" believed being "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," we hereby disallow the membership of our Association to any immersed believers who cannot prove that they walk as becomes the kingdom of God and of Christ.

7.— ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP.

Immersed believers of the gospel of the kingdom are admissible to membership by the unanimous consent of the Association, the absence of any objection privately stated in the presence of the applicant, who will make his application for admission to a presiding brother, or silence, being taken for consent.

The immersion of a believer of the gospel of the kingdom by a brother of our society, appointed to administer it, of itself constitutes the baptized person a member of our Association.

8.—THE EXECUTIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Our Executive is for the maintenance of decency and order in the meetings of the Association; the administration of the Supper and Baptism; attending to the admission of applicants to membership; the removal of any misunderstandings or difficulties that may arise to the hindrance of the objects of the Association; the disbursement of its contributions; and for whatever else needs to be attended to in behalf of the society.

In the heritages of God, planted by the apostles — these functions, with teaching, were distributed to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers," "helps and directors," endowed with certain specified natural qualifications, and appropriate spiritual gifts, "for the perfecting of them for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ." These perfected saints, or holy ones perfected for the work, were the many- branched candlestick of the heritage to which they belonged. They were, collectively, the eldership or presbytery of the association, and classified by Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, as "the bishops and deacons," or, in another place, "members in particular." We acknowledge the desirableness of an exactly similar institution as the Executive of the Association; and could we avail ourselves of brethren possessed of the natural qualifications, specified by Paul to Timothy and Titus, in whom "the word of Christ dwelt richly in all wisdom," we should be disposed to submit ourselves to them as "over us in the Lord;" but, seeing that at present such are not available, we agree that the executive functions of our Association shall be discharged as follows:

Three, four, or more, as the necessity of circumstances may demand in the unanimous estimation of the brethren, shall be selected because of their scriptural intelligence, good qualities and report. These select brethren shall not be regarded as "officers," but simply as brethren in particular, specially interested in promoting the objects and welfare of the Association. After speaking of elders, called *episcopoi*, or bishops, i.e., overseers—Paul then proceeds to speak of others, called —*diakonoi*, or deacons, i.e., overseers of the poor, and of secular affairs, almoners, &c.

Of the latter, he says: "Let these ALSO first be proved," implying by "also" that the episcopoi, or overlookers of the flock, should be proved as well as the diakonoi, or superintendents of secular affairs. These select brethren of our Association may therefore be considered, not as "bishops and deacons," but as probationers, who may or may not become official.

¶4. One of these brethren shall preside in rotation at the meetings of the Association for the breaking of bread and mutual edification. He will regulate the meeting for breaking of bread, according to No. 11, and will be careful to see that "all things be done decently and in order," as there prescribed.

If any applications for admission to membership, or for baptism, be made upon his day, or during the ensuing week, it will be his duty to ascertain the candidates' fitness in the presence of one or more. He will then make report of such fitness to the Association at its ordinary session, and during the "contribution;" and, if there be no objection, admission to membership shall be expressed on the following Lord's day, by the presiding brother extending to the accepted the right hand of fellowship for the whole. If the application be for baptism, then the subject's fitness being ascertained, the presiding brother shall administer it, or provide for its administration. At the conclusion of the meeting, he will announce the brother whose turn it will be to preside at the next assembly.

9.—EXPOSITION OF THE WORD TO THE EDIFICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION.

In Ecclesiastes it is written, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."

The Apostle James also saith: "Be swift to hear, and slow to speak, slow to wrath." Yet it was said to certain of old time "perfected for the work" by the Spirit: "Ye may all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Exhortation is, therefore, a part of prophesying, and, in being attempted, must be done without debate "to the edifying of the Church," or not at all. Hence, the Apostle saith, speaking to the prophesiers, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church;" and to all members in particular, "Let all things be done unto edifying."

We understand from these and other portions of the Word, "that it inculcates much thought and few words. Exhortation is hortatory instruction of a consoling character, founded on the testimony of God. We expect therefore, that those who "exhort" will first call our attention to some portion of Scripture by reading it, then show us the interpretation of what he has read, and afterwards bring it home to us in words of kindness, for our edification and comfort. To open a masked battery upon brethren is not "exhortation," and, being neither courteous nor christian, will not be allowed, but will be the duty of the presiding brother to stop it immediately, by rising and politely inviting such offender against good manners to take a seat. "Let thy words be few." In consenting, therefore, to suffer prophesying from uninspired men of ordinary talents and information, brethren will be expected to restrict themselves to fifteen minutes at most, unless at the discretion of the brother who presides.

10.—OF DIFFICULTIES AMONG MEMBERS.

If "Christ dwell in our hearts by faith," the Spirit of Christ will be there; and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," or freedom from the dominion of the flesh, which is sin. Difficulties arise from the absence of this Spirit in one or both. It is the duty of brethren not to burden others with their

misunderstandings, but to settle them before sundown by themselves. But if this cannot be effected, let them invite a brother to assist them in a return to oneness of mind. If the matter can by no means be reconciled, the case may then be referred to one of the select brethren, who, alone, or assisted by the other select brethren, shall labor to restore harmony without laying it before the Association. If this cannot be effected, the case may be reported to the Church, and we agree to withdraw the privileges of our society from the party who shall be manifestly in the wrong.

11.—THE ORDER OF WORSHIP.

After the custom of those instructed by the Apostles, the Association will convene for worship on the first day of the week. The members being assembled, the brother whose turn it is to preside will take the chair, and invite us to unite with him in invoking the blessing of the “Father of Lights,” and his acceptance of our spiritual sacrifices in the name of Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. After this the presiding brother will invite us to sing a portion selected from the Psalms of David or the “Paraphrases,” which may be proposed by himself, or by some other of the brethren, as he may prefer. The singing being ended, Scripture-reading will commence. A portion should be read from each of these four divisions: First division, from Genesis to Job, inclusive; second, from Psalms to Malachi, inclusive; third, from Matthew to Acts, inclusive; and fourth, from Romans to Revelation, inclusive. The presiding brother may distribute the reading among the best readers, reading a portion also himself according to his discretion. The four divisions are each to be read continuously to the end, beginning with the first chapter of Genesis, the first Psalm, the first chapter of Matthew, and the first chapter of Romans. After the reading, singing as before. A contribution will then be taken up, to defray whatever expenses may be incurred in carrying out the objects of the Association. The admission of members will be attended to at this juncture, according to Nos. 7, 8, ¶4.

The presiding brother will then proceed to the breaking of bread, any brother he may call upon being the medium of its distribution, he will remind the brethren of what it celebrates—as, the love of God, the self-sacrifice of Jehovah’s King for the saints, and for the world of which Abraham and He, and we with them, are all the heirs, &c. He will then give thanks for the things memorialized by the bread, or invite some other so to do. After its distribution, he will proceed in like manner with the wine.

When the wine is returned to the table, he will state how much time remains for the continuance of the session, and that it can now be occupied by expositions of the Word to edification according to No. 9. When these are finished, the meeting may be concluded with singing and prayer. This order may be succinctly Stated as follows:

1. Prayer by the presiding brother.
2. Singing.
3. Scripture-Reading:
 - a. From Genesis to Job.
 - b. From Psalms to Malachi.
 - c. From Matthew to Acts.
 - d. From Romans to Revelation.

4. Singing.
5. Contribution, and Reception of Members, if any.
6. Breaking of Bread, &c.
7. Exposition of the Word to edification.
8. Singing.
9. Prayer.

Signed by

CHARLES HALYBURTON.***

HENRY O. BENNETT.

JOHN THOMAS.

THOMAS BARKER.

JOHN McDONALD.***

JAMES MERRY.***

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.***

WILLIAM TOWERT.

***The four with this sign affixed to their names consented to act as "select brethren" to carry out the constitution they have subscribed.

FORM SUBSCRIBED BY MEMBERS ADMITTED SUBSEQUENTLY TO THE FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION.

We, the undersigned, having duly examined the Constitution recorded in this book, in subscribing our names do thereby attest, that the position defined in No. 2 is ours; and that we approve and accept of its provisions, and are determined to abide by them, and to use our influence in causing them to be respected.