

**EXTRACT FROM AN UNPUBLISHED
MANUSCRIPT ON SHAKER HISTORY, (BY
AN EYE WITNESS.), GIVING AN
ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF THEIR
SONGS, DANCES, MARCHES, VISIONS,
VISITS TO THE SPIRIT LAND, &C.**

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Extract from an Unpublished Manuscript on Shaker History, (by an eye witness.), giving an accurate description of their songs, dances, marches, visions, visits to the spirit land, &c. by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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INTRODUCTION.

As many people in New England have heard much of the retirement, purity, and cleanliness of a people called Shakers, and on visiting them, and hearing their own account of their method of training the young, and the inducements they generally hold out to the parents,—especially lone mothers living in large cities. [Many have been induced to Indenture their children to them, with the expectation of having them return to their home at the expiration of their minority, with good moral characters religious inclinations, and active business habits. They are told by these people, that when their children are of the age designated in the indenture, they will be at perfect liberty to return to the world if they please, or stay with them. As Shaker faith forbids persuasion or compulsion]

(There are very many sad evidences of the falsity of this assertion.) The little children are taught to believe that the world is sadly changed since they left it. — The school house the church, and every place of which the child is heard to speak, is all filled with toads or snakes.—The sun is hotter than it used to be, there is no good cooling water for thirsty little children to drink, the people have become very wicked, and God is punishing them by

letting them kill one another: And thus gradually the child is weaned from the world, and taught to believe that no little child can be so happy as the little Shaker, that the spirits of the dead come back, and dance and sing with them.) They receive messages from the spirit land forbidding them to speak or think of the world. The child grows up under these influences, and the results are felt by the poor disappointed mother, when all hope of ever receiving her son or daughter at her home have fled forever.

The object of the writer at this time, is, simply to lay before the world a few facts, of which she had been an eye witness.

CHAPTER I.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE SOCIETY CALLED SHAKERS, WITH A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MOTHER ANN LEE, THEIR FOUNDER.

To give the rise and progress of this Sect would be too great a task for me to undertake at this time. I would, however, cite the reader to books containing the fundamental principles of this society:—such as Dunlavy's *Manifesto*, the *Millental Church Book*, *Christ's Second Appearing*, &c., written by some learned men, members of the society at new Lebanon. But things published to the world, are not the hidden treasures or pearls of Shakerism.

This Society is constituted of Ministry, Elders, Trustees, Deacons and private members.—The head of this sect is stationed at New Lebanon, in New York: or in other words the *first gift* of God rests there. The established Order at New Lebanon holds the same relation to the Shaker as Rome to the Catholic. The gifts and orders, as the Constitution and by laws are termed, are all drawn up and sanctioned by the Order of God at that place.—An Order is constituted of four persons—two of each sex,—the Ministry is composed of this number, as Elder A. and Elderess B. Brother C. and Sister D. The second never bear any other title than brother or sister. The same titles are conferred upon the order of Elders in each Family. The Trustees at the Church, or first order so called, lives in the Office; those worthy persons are such as the ministry have proved

trusty unwavering Shakers. Their duty is to transact business with the world, and take charge of company, lest they would pass their limits, and allure the wavering and unstable minded from their most holy faith, and ruin their immortal souls. There are also Deacon and Deaconess at each Family. Their particular vocation is to distribute the clothing, see to the work, weigh and measure the family allowance for the kitchen, and take charge of whatever the Trustees place in their hands.

Each Society have three families—first, second and third.—The third or young believers order, is the door by which all persons enter, by confessing their sins to the Elders of this family; the Elders at the third and second families, confess their sins and are obedient to the Elders of the first family at the Church. Private members are obedient to the Deacons, the Deacons to the Trustees, the Trustees to the Elders, the Elders to the Ministry, the Ministry to the first order of God's anointed at New Lebanon.

They hold God is in his creatures, and there must be worshipped; consequently, those who hold any office, are gods to those under them, and they too worship God in those still before them, and so on, to the Ministry at New Lebanon—who confess their sins to the Godhead.

This people profess to believe Christ made his Second appearance in the person of one ANN LEE, an English woman, daughter of James Lee, a blacksmith, of Manchester, England. This woman was formerly employed in a hat manufactory, Manchester,—was married to a Mr. Stanly very young,—had four or five children, all of which died in infancy. She became a zealous follower of James and Jane Wadleigh, heads of a sect of New Lights, in that place.

According to accounts given us in the Millinial Church Book, of this very extraordinary personage, she began very early in life to feel the weight of immortal souls—the awful

sinfulness of sin—and the depth of man's fall. Although she could neither read or write, yet she managed to find out something of the Scriptures by others, this will account for her predilection for the Apocrypha. I have been told by an Eldress, that Mother always said that the Apocrypha was the cream of the Bible.

We read she labored day and night incessantly, to discover the root of all evil, and becoming convinced beyond a doubt where it laid, she opened a flaming testimony against it, which called down upon her head showers of persecution, too cruel for long endurance. Tradition tells us her father, husband, brother and adopted son, with James and Jane Wadleigh, acknowledged her their head, and conferred on her the name of Mother, which name she has ever since retained, as mother in the new creation.

By continual fasting and prayer—deep agony of soul—incessant cries—groans—tears and entreaties,—by day and by night, she wasted away, till becoming helpless, her followers were under the necessity of taking her in their arms as an infant, it is said she was fed with pap from a spoon, the larger portion of the time she was travelling to the NEW BIRTH.—She travelled nine years in the manner above-mentioned, when her labors for herself ceased—she was born in the regeneration—completely redeemed from all the propensities of a fallen nature, in July, 1760.

At this period is dated the commencement of the Millennium, or Christ's Second Appearing. (They think this the time spoken of by Jeremiah the Prophet. "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: Thou shalt again be adorned with Tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances, for them that make merry."—Jer. 31) "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together."—Jer. 31. "Your sons and daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions, &c."—Joel 2.