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Probationer's Guide

INSTRUCTION TO

CANDIDATES

FOR ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

IN THE

Free Methodist Church

CHICAGO, ILL.

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THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

ORIGIN AND CHARACTER

¶ 1. Dearly Beloved: We think it expedient to give you a brief account of the origin and character of Free Methodism.

Wesley says: "In the year 1729, two young men in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness; they followed after it and invited others to do so. In 1737, they saw, likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified: but still holiness was their object. God thrust them out to raise up a holy people."

¶ 2. Methodism spread through England, and America, and in other countries. From time to time, different bodies arose bearing the Methodist name. As they became popular there was more or less departure from the original principles and practice of Methodism.

¶ 3. In the Genesee conference of the Methodist Episcopal church, about the year 1858, several preachers, and many members were excluded from

the church on various charges and allegations, but really for their adherence to the principles of Methodism; especially to the doctrine and experience of "entire sanctification."

¶ 4. Appeals were made to the general conference, which were denied. Those excluded could not join any other Methodist body, for there was none that agreed with them on the issues on which they were thrust out. Therefore they felt compelled to form a new organization.

¶ 5. The Free Methodist church was organized by a convention of laymen and ministers, which met at Pekin, Niagara Co., N. Y., on the 23rd day of August, 1860. The first general conference met on the second Wednesday of October, 1862, at St. Charles, Ill.

¶ 6. The Free Methodists are a body of Christians who profess to be in earnest to get to heaven, by conforming to all the will of God, as made known in his word. They do not believe that either God or the Bible has changed to accommodate the fashionable tendencies of the age. They solemnly protest against the union of the church and the world. The conditions of salvation, as they teach, are the same now that they were eighteen hundred years ago. He who would be a Christian in reality, as well as in name, must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Jesus. He must come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing.

¶ 7. In doctrine they are Methodists. They believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in a general atonement, in the necessity of the new birth,

in the witness of the spirit, and in future rewards and punishments. They insist that it is the duty and privilege of every believer to be sanctified wholly, and to be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one who is received into full connection, either professes to enjoy that perfect love which casts out fear, or promises to diligently seek*until he obtains it.

¶ 8. They look upon practical godliness as the never-failing result of a genuine religious experience. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Hence they insist that those who profess to be the disciples of Christ should come out from unbelievers and be separate, abstaining from connection with all secret societies, renouncing all vain pomp and glory, adorning themselves with modest apparel, and not with gold, or pearls, or costly array. We have no right to abolish any of the requirements made by Christ and the apostles; or to make obedience to them a matter of small consequence. The golden rule, they hold, applies equally to all mankind.

¶ 9. The government is not aristocratic; but the members have an equal voice with the ministers in all the councils of the church, except that, in addition to the regularly elected ministerial representatives in the general conference, the general superintendents are ex officio members of that body. Both the annual and the general conferences are composed of as many lay as ministerial delegates, who have an equal voice and vote in all the proceedings. The stationing committee, by which the appointments are made, is composed of the district

elders and an equal number of laymen chosen for that purpose. The official boards are selected by the members of circuits, and not appointed by the preachers. They have district elders, who may be appointed to circuits the same as the rest of the preachers. They have general superintendents, elected once in four years, whose duty it is to preside at the annual conferences, and travel through the connection at large. The rights of the members are carefully guarded.

¶ 10. They endeavor to promote spirituality and simplicity in worship. Congregational singing is universal, and performances upon musical instruments, and singing by choirs in public worship are prohibited. They believe in the Holy Ghost. If men are really converted and sanctified, it is through the Spirit of God. When he works there is a stir. As President Edwards says, "Eternal things are so great, and of such vast concern, that there is great absurdity in men being but moderately moved and affected by them." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Free Methodists, while they do not believe in any mere formal noise, yet, when the Spirit comes, like "a rushing mighty wind," as on the day of Pentecost, do not dare to oppose the manifestations of his presence. As Edwards says, "Whenever there is any considerable degree of the Spirit's influence upon a mixed multitude, it will produce, in some way, a great visible commotion." To resist his operations is to hinder the work of God.

¶ 11. They do not believe in resorting to worldly policy to sustain the gospel. Christ has said, that

whosoever giveth a cup of cold water in his name, shall in no wise lose his reward. But it is the motive, and not the amount done that secures the divine approbation. There is no more virtue in giving to the cause of God for carnal pleasure, than there is in any other purely selfish action. Hence they give no countenance to modern expedients for promoting Christianity, such as selling or renting pews, picnics, Christmas trees, festivals, lotteries, fairs, and donation parties. To say that the church cannot be sustained without these contrivances to beguile the world into its support, is to confess that professing Christians are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." It is to pronounce Christianity a failure. The gospel possesses an inherent power that will not only sustain itself, but make its way through all opposition, wherever its advocates live up to its requirements and rely upon its promises.

¶ 12. All their churches are required to be as free as the grace they preach. They believe that their mission is two-fold—to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the gospel to the poor. Hence they require that all seats in their houses of worship shall be free. No pews can be rented or sold among them. The world will never be converted to Christ, so long as the churches are conducted upon the exclusive system. It has always been contrary to the economy of the Christian church to build houses of worship with pews to rent. But the spirit of the world has encroached, by little and little, until, in many parts of the United States, not a single free church can

be found in any of the cities or larger villages. The new system prevails among nearly all denominations. They are thoroughly convinced that this system is wrong in principle and bad in tendency. It is a corruption of Christianity. Free churches are essential to reach the masses. The provisions of the gospel are for all. The "glad tidings" must be proclaimed to every individual of the human race. God sends the true light to illuminate and melt every heart. To savage and civilized, bond and free, black and white, the ignorant and the learned, is freely offered the great salvation.

But for whose benefit are special efforts to be put forth? Who must be particularly cared for? Jesus settles this question. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," and, as if all this would be insufficient to satisfy John of the validity of his claims, he adds, "and the poor have the gospel preached to them." This was the crowning proof that he was the one that should come. In this respect the church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it that the gospel is preached to the poor. Thus this duty is enjoined by the plainest precepts and examples. If the gospel is to be preached to all, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that all the arrangements for preaching the gospel should be so made as to secure this object. If it be said that seats would be freely given to those who are unable to pay for them, they answer, this does not meet the case. Few are willing, so long as they are able

to appear at church, to be publicly treated as paupers.

¶ 13. You will find in this book the doctrines and form of government of the Free Methodist church as adopted by the general conference.

We do not wish any to subscribe to it unless they believe it will be for the glory of God and the good of their souls. We have no desire to build up simply a large church; but we do hope that our societies will be composed, exclusively, of those who are in earnest to gain heaven, and who are determined, by the grace of God, to live up to the requirements of the Bible.

It is of the greatest importance that those who come into this organization shall be of one heart and one mind.

DOCTRINES

I. OF FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

¶ 14. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, WHO WAS MADE VERY MAN.

¶ 15. The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin, so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for the original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

III. OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

¶ 16. Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertain-

ing to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.

IV. OF THE HOLY GHOST.

¶ 17. The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

V. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION.

¶ 18. The holy scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. By the term holy scriptures we understand those canonical books of the Old, and New Testament of whose authority there was never any doubt in the church.

NAMES OF THE CANONICAL BOOKS.

Genesis,
Exodus,
Leviticus,
Numbers,
Deuteronomy,
Joshua,
Judges,
Ruth,
The First Book of Samuel,
The Second Book of Samuel,

The First Book of Kings,
 The Second Book of Kings,
 The First Book of Chronicles,
 The Second Book of Chronicles,
 The Book of Ezra,
 The Book of Nehemiah,
 The Book of Esther,
 The Book of Job,
 The Psalms,
 The Proverbs,
 Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher,
 Canticles, or the Song of Solomon,
 Four Prophets the greater,
 Twelve Prophets the less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

VI. OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

¶ 19. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for in both the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof, of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from obedience to the commandments which are called moral.

VII. OF ORIGINAL OR BIRTH SIN.

¶ 20. Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk, but it is the corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil and that continually.

VIII. OF FREE WILL.

¶ 21. The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasing and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ enabling us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

IX. OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN.

¶ 22. We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

X. OF GOOD WORKS.

¶ 23. Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgments, yet they are pleasing and acceptable to

God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

XI. OF WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION.

¶ 24. Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which are called works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

XII. OF SIN AFTER JUSTIFICATION.

¶ 25. Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here, or who deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

XIII. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

¶ 26. Justified persons, while they do not outwardly commit sin, are nevertheless conscious of

sin still remaining in the heart. They feel a natural tendency to evil, a proneness to depart from God and cleave to the things of earth. Those who are sanctified wholly are saved from all inward sin—from evil thoughts and evil tempers. No wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul. All their thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love.

Entire sanctification takes place subsequently to justification, and is the work of God wrought instantaneously upon the consecrated, believing soul. After a soul is cleansed from all sin, it is then fully prepared to grow in grace.

XIV. FUTURE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.

¶ 27. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel. The righteous shall have in heaven an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, where there worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

XV. OF SPEAKING IN THE CONGREGATION IN SUCH A TONGUE AS THE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND.

¶ 28. It is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church or to minister the sacrament in a tongue not understood by the people.

XVI. OF THE CHURCH.

¶ 29. The visible church of Christ is a congregation of pure men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

XVII. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

¶ 30. Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but also they are certain signs of grace, and God's good-will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

XVIII. OF BAPTISM.

¶ 31. Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church.

XIX. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

¶ 32. The supper of the Lord is not merely a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death, inso-much that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by holy writ, but it is repugnant to the plain word of scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

XX. OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST, FINISHED UPON THE CROSS.

¶ 33. The offering of Christ, once made, is a perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of the masses, in the which it is said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous and dangerous deceit.

XXI. OF THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF CHURCHES.

¶ 34. It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men's manners, so that nothing be or-

dained against God's word. Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren. Every particular church may ordain, change or abolish rites and ceremonies so that all things may be done to edification.

XXII. OF CHRISTIAN MEN'S GOODS.

¶ 35. The riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor according to his ability.

XXIII. OF A CHRISTIAN MAN'S OATH.

¶ 36. As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James the apostle; so we hold that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth in a case of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment and truth.

NOTE: This article shall not deprive of membership in our church those who have conscientious scruples against taking an oath.

DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL RULES.

¶ 37. In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which, thenceforward, they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. For these and as many more as desired to join with them, for their number increased daily, he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meetings with prayer suited to their several necessities.

¶ 38. This was the rise of the united society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united

in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

¶ 39. That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty,

I. To see each person in his class once a week, at least, in order,

1. To inquire how their souls prosper.
2. To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.
3. To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preacher, the church and the poor.*

II. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the circuit, in order,

1. To inform the minister of any who are sick, or of any who walk disorderly, and will not be reproved.
2. To pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes during the week.

¶ 40. There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies,—“a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever

*This part refers to towns and cities, where the poor are generally numerous, and church expenses are considerable.

this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.

¶ 41. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced; such as,

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

The buying, selling, or holding of a human being as a slave.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury; i. e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God; as,

Belonging to secret societies.

The putting on of gold or costly apparel.

The taking of such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Singing those songs or reading those books which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness or needless self-indulgence, especially snuffing, chewing, smoking, growing, manufacturing or selling tobacco, or the habitual use of opiates.

Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

¶ 42. It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Second, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort and as far as possible to all men.

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping those who are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all with whom we have any intercourse, trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to do it."

By doing good, especially to those who are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying of one another, helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake.

¶ 43. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire for salvation,

Third, By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are,

The public worship of God;

The ministry of the word, either read, or expounded;

The supper of the Lord;

Family and private prayer;

Searching the scriptures; and,

Fasting or abstinence.

¶ 44. These are the general rules of our societies, all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice. And all these we know the Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his way. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more a place among us. We have delivered our souls.

CHAPTER II.

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

¶ 45. None shall be admitted on probation until they give evidence of a desire to flee from the wrath to come, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, and give affirmative answers to the following questions: 1. Have you the assurance of sins forgiven? 2. Do you consent to be governed by our general rules?

¶ 46. None shall be received into full connection, unless they give evidence of a renewed heart, by living up to the requirements of the general rules, and have met in class six months on probation, have been *baptized, have, wherever practicable, been recommended by the official members of the society, and give satisfactory answers to the following questions, which shall be proposed to them before the society:

1. Have you the witness of the Spirit that you are a child of God?

2. Have you that perfect love which casteth out fear?

(If the candidate shall answer no, then this ques-

*Persons baptized in infancy must publicly assent to the baptismal covenant.

tion shall be asked: "Will you diligently seek until you obtain it?")

3. Is it your purpose to devote yourself the remainder of your life wholly to the service of God, doing good to your fellow men, and working out your own salvation with fear and trembling?

4. Will you forever lay aside all superfluous ornaments, and adorn yourself in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but, which becometh those professing godliness, with good works?

5. Will you abstain from connection with all secret societies, keeping yourself free to follow the will of the Lord in all things?

6. Do you subscribe to our articles of religion, our general rules, and our Discipline, and are you willing to be governed by the same?

7. Have you Christian fellowship and love for the members of this society, and will you assist them, as God shall give you ability, in carrying on the work of the Lord?

¶ 47. The person giving affirmative answers to the above questions shall, with the consent of three-fourths of all the members present at a society meeting, be admitted to all the privileges of a member. Any person in good standing in any evangelical church may be received into full connection, upon his meeting the other requirements of this chapter, without his having been on probation in our church.

¶ 48. Where societies already organized, or several persons design to unite with the Free Metho-

dist church and form a new society, they should adopt the Discipline as a whole, and then each person should be admitted in his individual capacity as provided for above.

CHAPTER III.

DRESS.

¶ 49. We insist on the rules concerning dress. This is no time to give encouragement to superfluity of apparel. Therefore, receive none into the church till they have left off superfluous ornaments. In order to this: 1. Every one who has charge of a circuit shall read Mr. Wesley's sermons on dress, at least once a year in every society. 2. In visiting the classes be very mild but very strict. 3. Allow of no exempt case; better one suffer than many.

CHAPTER IV.

MARRIAGE.

¶ 50. We do not prohibit our people from marrying persons who are not members of our church, provided such persons give evidence of being converted to God; but we are determined to discourage their marrying those who do not come up to this standard.

¶ 51. Some of our members have married with unsaved persons. This has produced bad effects. They have either been hindered for life or have turned back to perdition. To discourage such marriages: 1. Every preacher shall publicly enforce the apostle's command, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," 2 Corinthians vi, 14. 2. All should be exhorted never to marry without advising with some of the more serious of their brethren.

¶ 52. In general a woman ought not to marry without the consent of her parents. Yet there may be exceptions. For if, 1, a woman believes it to be her duty to marry, and if, 2, her parents absolutely refuse to let her marry any Christian, then she may, nay, ought to, marry without their consent.

We recognize no other ground for divorce than that permitted in the word of God—Matt. v, 32, and Mark x, 11 and 12. Any person guilty of a

violation of this law shall have no place among us.

¶ 53. Our preachers shall not officiate at the marriage of any person who is under eighteen years of age, unless the parents or guardians be present or have given written consent, and unless at least two witnesses, knowing the contracting parties, be present. They shall in every case refuse to officiate at the marriage of divorced parties, unless furnished with satisfactory evidence that the case is such as would not conflict with the law of divorce recognized in the preceding paragraph.

CHAPTER V.

SECRET SOCIETIES.

¶ 54. Voluntary associations are not necessarily sinful because they are secret. But secrecy is always a ground of suspicion. Evil works instinctively incline to darkness. Good works grow up in light. God commands us to let our light shine. Even a good cause under the shadow of secrecy invalidates its claim to the confidence of open and honest men. Grace and guile can have no affinity. All secrets necessary to be kept can be kept without an oath. A bad institution should not, and a good one need not, be secret. Philanthropic associations claiming our co-operation on Christian grounds, must do so with open face. They must lift the veil while demanding our salutation, or we cannot salute them by the way. Therefore, all secret societies are to be eschewed.

Any society requiring an oath, affirmation, or promise of secrecy, as a condition of membership, is held to be a secret society; and any member joining or continuing in such, violates his covenant obligations, and shall in due form be excluded from the church; and the preacher shall report that he is excluded for infraction of our rules and regulations.

CHAPTER VI.

TEMPERANCE.

¶ 55. A spirit of self-denial is indispensable to the Christian character. A large proportion of the crime and pauperism of the country is caused by strong drink. The Spirit of Christ never leads one to countenance the use or sale of intoxicating liquor as a beverage.

¶ 56. The stewards on all our circuits shall make provision to use the unfermented juice of the grape in celebrating the Lord's supper. In no case shall intoxicating wine be used for this purpose.

¶ 57. Every man of God should break away from party trammels, and never knowingly give his vote or influence to elect any man to office who will use his official or personal influence to legalize the traffic in intoxicating liquors as a beverage. As Christians we are bound to do all we can to prohibit by law this nefarious traffic.





