

A

Synopsis of Doctrine

Taught By

Believers In Christ's Second Appearing

By: Elder Alonzo Hollister

**In The First Order At
The Church of New Lebanon "Holy Mount"**

1902

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SYNOPSIS OF DOCTRINE TAUGHT

By Elder Alonzo G. Hollister

Chapter 1

1. Shakers when asked, “What is your creed?” Have ever protested that we have no creed in the sense of a formal declaration of belief, for a test of fellowship. Our test of fellowship is what a person does or is willing to do. If they are honest, or wish to be honest, (and unless he does he cannot succeed), his belief will conform to the evidence appearing to his understanding. Nor will he refuse to entertain evidence from a credible source, merely because it is not agreeable to his previous notion. On the contrary, if he is in a living, growing state of advance toward higher conditions, he will earnestly seek light regarding those conditions he wishes to obtain. Even teachers, if wise and qualified for that office, ever maintain an attitude of childlike learning and receptivity to truth that is beyond them. “I want instructors and God’s greatest gift is a teacher”, writes a well-known author, who was himself a teacher of profound, illuminating and universal ideas. Jesus taught from spirit inflow, for he says, “I can do nothing of myself, but as I hear I judge.” “The words which I speak to you, I speak not from myself, but the Father in me abiding, He doeth the works.” He bade his disciples not to meditate beforehand what they should say, when arraigned before judges and kings, for in that same hour it would be given them and the Holy Spirit should speak in them.

2. We labor to present evidence that will produce the one faith and one baptism, essential to harmonize all the followers of Christ in one spirit and purpose, of which the first work is to conquer sin and selfishness within, and to become a new creature on the spiritual plane of life. Faith is belief, but belief in error is not true faith. “True faith is a saving grace. True faith is to believe a thing to be what it really is.” Truth is the Eternal substance of being. Faith in the truth, as “evidence of things unseen”, is the beginning of all knowledge. Doing the truth yields experience and converts faith into knowledge, and truth into life. Hence doing enlarges being, increases knowledge, deepens and clarifies understanding, strengthens faith and is the final test of both knowledge and truth. If practice be not joined to faith, though faith be ever so true, life will be barren of faith’s fruit, and knowledge received upon trust will remain meager or undeveloped, if it does not entirely vanish. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”, spoken by His messengers.

3. Principles do not change, but to the advancing pilgrim they present various aspects of mutually sustaining relationships. Utterances of people may vary in dealing with the same or different aspects, without necessarily involving a conflict of ideas. Our system is in its infancy, but its principles attribute unlimited advance to mind in the discovery and practice of truth. Mother Ann taught, “You should make the way of God your occupation. The way of God is to be learned as much as any trade. You learn to have faith, learn to believe. A man that has a trade is industrious to work at it to get a living. You ought to be as industrious, and as much engaged in the way of God.”

4. Our gospel relates what God has done, and is doing for us and our fellow beings. Spell means to relate, as a story, or history. It also means a magic charm. Gospel is equivalent to “go tell, or relate what you have found.” Gospel is also a euphemistic contraction of God’s spell, or charm, in

contradistinction to man's spell, the world's spell, the spell of passion, of appetite, or of any unworthy object. God being the center and support of life, and Source of all needed supplies, can have nothing less than a beneficent influence, and when true relations are established, we must exert a wholesome and wise control, and promote a harmonious and perfect development of all our faculties.

5. The following Synoptic View, arranged by request, outlines some of the leading doctrines of Shaker faith according to present attainments in knowledge of one who has been *fifty years* a practicing student thereof. Some things we know, having proved them. We know that in keeping Christ's commandments there is peace, love, union and joy in a Holy Spirit.

Alonzo G. Hollister.

**WE BELIEVE
BEST THINGS ARE HARDEST WON.**

Chapter 2

1. We believe in God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. We believe that "God is a fountain of perfect light, love and goodness; and no soul can truly know God, but will love Him (Mother Ann Lee)." God is One in Essence, as is a perfect seed, but is dual in His highest, clearest, complete and perfect manifestation, as when His character is produced in man and in woman. God is Father and Mother of all virtuous intelligences, and the Primal Source of all happiness (See Genesis 1:27, Proverbs 8:22-30, Matthew 11:19, Isaiah 66:13, and Romans 1:20).

2. We believe in the Holy Spirit, which emanates from the Divine Unity, and conveys a knowledge of the Divine Will and Wisdom of God, with Power to keep all of His commandments, to whosoever will receive and retain it in their hearts, to be their Guide and Teacher, — that it is an assimilating, transforming energy, to change all such into its own Divine likeness (See Luke 11:13, Romans 12:2, Philippians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 2:10, John 14:16-26 and 2 Corinthians 3:18).

3. We believe in Jesus Christ, The Anointed, the true and faithful Witness of God, and first-born from the dead into the New Creation. That he denied his own will, crucified his carnal propensities, overcame the world, spent his strength in serving others, gave his life as a ransom for many, (Matthew 20:28) opened the way to Eternal Life to mortals, brought the reign of the Heavens down to Earth, left us an example that we should follow in his steps, was taken by wicked hands and cruelly slain, tarried a while after his return from hades to teach and comfort his disciples and before he left them, promised to come again and receive them to himself (See Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 4:15, Philippians 2:7-11 and Ephesians 1:20-22).

4. We believe that in what has been called the Christian Church, there was a total apostasy of its heads from the faith, which Christ placed in his first appearing (See 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 11). The power of the Holy people was scattered, Christ's witnesses were killed in the Sacred name of religion (John 16:2), the Man of sin desolated the temple of God, and the Holy City of Christian principles was trodden underfoot by

aliens, 1260 years and more, till the Spirit from God again descended and entered into the Witnesses. The Witnesses arose and stood upon their feet – i.e., upon the first principles of understanding or accepted truth, and not on any foundation of Antichrist, nor creed of man’s devising (See Daniel 12:7).

5. We believe that Christ, the Spirit of truth, has appeared as promised, a second time, without sin, unto salvation, because by obedience to the Witnesses of that appearing we are saved from all sin in our knowledge. We are also freed from bondage to the world and from all lusts of the flesh and mind, and are able to keep the commandments of Christ and bear witness to the truths he taught by living as he lived, and walking in his steps of self-sacrifice and spiritual consecration. In so doing we find that peace, love, union and joy which satisfies our home feelings beyond anything the world can give or take away (See Hebrews 9:28 and John 14:27, John 14:21-23, Revelation 11:11, 1 John 2:3 and Romans 14:17). Angels are messengers (Angel means messenger), whether spirits or mortals (See Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10, Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 etc.).

6. We believe in community of interest, in things spiritual and temporal, as a result of that love for one another which the baptism of the Holy Spirit confers, and which Jesus announced as the criterion by which all men should know his disciples (See John 13:35 and Acts 4:32).

7. We believe in confessing and forsaking sin and in righting every wrong, and in making restitution if we have injured or defrauded any in person, property or character. That confession should be made before a witness or witnesses of God, both as a testimony against the sin and to strip off the covering of hypocrisy whereby one is made to appear better in his own esteem and in the eyes of others than he secretly knows himself to be; also to mortify the nature of sin, which by concealing its actions from the light which manifests their depravity, preserves its strength for further assaults (See Luke 12:2-3, Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9).

8. We believe in losing our attachment from everything that we can be deprived of by death, and in consecrating all of our time, talents, strength and possessions, unreservedly, to serve God in humanity forever. First, by mutually serving one another in the family of Christ and then whosoever needs, as far as strength and means will go. This is genuine religious service for all who worship the Father and Mother in spirit and in truth (See Matthew 6:19-20, Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 2:21 and Matthew 13:44-46).

9. We believe in a pure, Virgin Life, in deed, word and thought. For in no other way can we keep a clean conscience and self-respect, or preserve our hearts pure from adultery and fornication. We can look out of chaste eyes and love one another unselfishly and purely, and give our hearts undivided to God and Eternal Wisdom, to obey the commandments, only by following the rule of purity and hating all unclean desires with utter detestation (See Matthew 5:28, Revelation 14:4, Romans 8:7-8, 1 Corinthians 7:34, Matthew 6:24 and Titus 1:15).

10. We believe that the children of God, those who are led by the Spirit of God and are “the children of the resurrection, neither marry nor are given in marriage” and that all who make that contract previous to hearing the call of Christ must forsake it and all the relationships growing out of it, in order to become Christ’s disciples and to follow him in the narrow way to Eternal Life (See Luke 14:20-33, 1 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Corinthians 7:29 and Mark 10:28-29).

11. It is a fundamental law of progressive order, engraved in geologic strata, that inferior organizations shall give way to superior, as fast as the creation and growth of the latter require it. Hence we regard it as perfectly normal, legitimate and righteous, that the natural family on which the world relies for social order and continuance and which however good in its place provides home comforts for only a small circle; and is extremely limited in its benefactions toward that large class of whom death, disease, poverty, incapacity, or untoward circumstances have deprived of home, should be dissolved and pass away before the family of Christ, which is the basis of social order in the everlasting Kingdom of God. The family of Christ, organized on the principle of universal love, capable of indefinite expansion, to provide a home for souls emancipated from selfish thrall, excludes none who will conform to its laws, however unfortunate, or forlorn, or destitute may have been their previous condition (See Daniel 2:44 and Matthew 10:35-39).

12. We believe in practical peace with all people, but not with hypocritical vices in ourselves, nor in others, and in overcoming evil with good. To return evil for evil and hate for hate, is to be overcome with evil and to increase hate which eats like fire (See Matthew 5:39 and James 4:7).

13. We believe in the absolute and Eternal distinction and final separation in the Judgment established in Christ's people, between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, that these are not convertible one to the other, and never can be (See John 3:19-21, Revelation 21:27 and Matthew 13:41).

14. We believe in separation from the world, that we may establish environments adapted to the requirement of life from above. And because we "are not of the world", we take no part in its politics other than to advise and to pray for just rulers. Let the earthly man muzzle or slay the wild beasts of his own raising. Yet we desire that rulers be just, ruling in the fear and love of the Most High God, and striving for the best good of all the people. That kind of religion, which consists in obedience to moral, intellectual and spiritual laws, should reign in politics, as in all else that concerns human conduct. The absence of this, characterizes the dominion of the "beast" (See John 15:19, 1 John 2:15 and James 1:27).

15. We believe in the equality of male and female in all honors, duties, rights and privileges.

16. We believe in mental and manual industry, for "godliness doth not lead to idleness", but "the hand of the diligent shall bear rule." By work we learn, and improve our faculties. Work clarifies and invigorates mind and body. It disperses clouds, banishes fear and supplies the elements of life, health and cheer. The true worker is a creator (See 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Matthew 5:16, 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and Ephesians 2:10).

17. We believe in an ever-present revelation in the Church of Christ, proceeding from the heavens of Eternal Life. That by revelation God has established an order in earthen vessels, to be Head of the visible church, for judgment, for reproof and correction, for blessing, protection and direction, to whose decisions we are in duty bound to submit, as to the oracles of God. "God is submission" to His own order and laws. Obedience cements our union to the Head, through which we receive life, and to one another and seals our membership in Christ's body, the church, Lo! The tabernacle of God is with men. He dwells in His people. They know His voice and they follow Him of choice. A Stranger's voice they will not mind (See Matthew 28:20, John 16:13, 1 John 2:27 and 1 Corinthians 12:3-13, 28).

18. We believe that Mother Ann Lee, Father William Lee, Father James Whittaker, Father Joseph Meacham, Mother Lucy Wright and others who labored with them and many who have succeeded them, were and are true witnesses of God and of Christ in his second appearing. They are ministers of Eternal Life to all who obey the testimony which they bore in word and work, against evil and for good (Matthew 7:16-20). He shall send forth his messengers and the reapers are the messengers (John 13:20 and Acts 10:41). Only witnesses chosen of God saw Jesus after his exit from the body. And none but they, and those who believed their testimony could ever know of his return from hades and ascent into heaven. He has come again in the same manner to witnesses, chosen of God, who have both seen and conversed with him. We believe their testimony, because of their works, and the effect of their obedience on our lives.

19. We believe in the practice of industry, order, economy, cleanliness, prudence, patience, steadfastness, perseverance, gentleness, kindness, meekness, forgiving injuries and in charity for all who are seeking reformation of character by repentance and good works (See Matthew 7:21, James 1:23-25 and 2 Peter 1:5-10).

20. Yea, we believe good works are the foundation of all moral and spiritual progress and virtuous achievement — for without good works, love would fail and belief and knowledge would be of no avail. Good works are our passport and title deed to the Heavenly inheritance. Faith without works is dead and next to nothing. Works are the fruit and test of faith. No one can have too many of the righteous kind, nor can anyone be saved without them. “He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do, and greater also.” “Work out your salvation.” “He shall reward everyone according to his works.” Character, nor works are not transferable; they must both unfold from within. No one can be saved by substitution (See Titus 2:14, James 2:24 and Colossians 1:10).

21. We believe in self-abasement, but not in debasement; in self-denial and self-sacrifice to the full extent commanded — in patient continuance in well doing, whatever be the trials, afflictions, opposition or hardships we may have to encounter. The terms are equal and alike to all. Without the cross of Christ and the loss of all things dear to the carnal mind, there can be no power over sin and no victory over the world (See Galatians 6:14, Matthew 16:24-26, Philippians 2:3 and John 16:33).

22. We believe God accepts not faces but character. Those who seek will find; to those who knock it shall be opened. God’s mercy is infinite as well as His justice and in the end all wrongs will be righted and justice will be done in mercy to every creature that will hold itself in condition to receive mercy (See 2 Peter 3:9, James 5:11, 1 Timothy 2:4, Luke 15:10 and Luke 15:20).

23. We believe that the spirit world is within and around every one of us and that we make our own conditions there, happy or miserable, according as we obey or disobey the moral and spiritual light shed upon our pathway here. Like gathers to like, there as here and states and conditions there along with degree of elevation, are determined solely by moral quality. We build and furnish our own habitation in the spirit world and shall find there precisely what we put into life here. We reap in the present the fruits of past actions continually, but not a full harvest until we go over there.

24. We believe that the gospel is preached to the dead in hades, or the invisible world, in the season of Judgment (See Revelation 14:6-7), “that they may be judged according to men in flesh, but live according to God in spirit”, as taught by Jesus and Peter and by the Founders and Seers of our Order (See 1 Peter 3:19, 1 Peter 4:6 and John 5:25-29). Consequently that in the disembodied state, opportunity is given to all for repentance and change of character, by turning from evil to good and to improve by advance from good to better and from lower to higher conditions. No one will be denied a fair chance to become a New Creation in the Heavens of Eternal Life. But the change is easier made here than there by such as have sufficient foresight and the gain is greater even as it is easier in the end to live free from debt and lay up a little day by day, than it is to live upon borrowing and then have to make three fold exertion to pay it all back at last — or as it is easier to change the direction of a stream at its source than that of a river at its mouth. And inasmuch as the disembodied spirit is far more active and sensitive than the incarnated one, it costs far greater sufferings there to become purged from the nature and effects of sins not repented of here.

25. We believe there is some good in all religious denominations, also in people of no religious profession, but that any system of belief which promises mankind happiness without doing righteously and abstaining from all known evil, is a cheat, a delusion and a snare. Also that any system of belief which does not take away sin from the heart and purify the soul and set it free to obey all commandments of God, is but tentative and temporary and must pass away before the perfect work which frees the creature from the service of self and the world here and now, purifies and redeems them from error and makes the individual a New Creation in Christ (See 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, John 8:32-34 and 1 John 3:6-10).

26. We believe it is right to own God where we find Him, in man, woman or child. “He that receives a little child in my name”, says the Divine Teacher, “receives me and he that receives me receives Him that sent me.” In every nation under Heaven, he that reveres God, abstains from all known evil and works righteousness, is accepted of Him. And though in duty we are bound to expose error according to wisdom given us, both in doctrine and practice, we respect every man’s sincerity and good intentions and we cordially approve of every good work (See Acts 10:35 and John 7:7).

27. We believe that, as God is light and in Him is no darkness, to be in Him we must keep in the light by having all of our works known to His witnesses and abstain from works of darkness (See 1 John 1:5-7 and Ephesians 5:13).

28. The writer of foregoing Synopsis believes that the physical body, in addition to being a habitation for the soul, is both a tool or machine for the mind to do its Earthly work with and a chemical laboratory carried on by the vital principle without taxing thought or volition, to elaborate from food, drink and air, the ethereal essences of matter which compose the psychic body to succeed this visible frame and form the spirit’s dwelling till prepared to receive the true spiritual and resurrection body, which is altogether celestial, clear transparency, without mar or defect, on the higher, boundless, perfect and completely emancipated plane of Eternal Life. The psychic body, by some called the astral, by others mistaken for the spiritual, in which are stored all the fruits of Earth life, is still natural and common to all human natural creatures. But as we rise by spiritual progression from plane to planes higher, we cast off the external coating of the plane we leave and have no more use for it than has the physical body for its worn-out material, which is being constantly thrust aside by fresh supplies of new material molded to meet the requirements of new uses and new environments. The celestial and Eternal body is at least in part a product of the Divine Eternal Life, of which it is the instrument. We have heard from the resurrection Heavens that there is no end to advancing in Eternal Life. “For the faithful God will be creating New Heavens for their

enjoyment throughout all Eternity (Mother Ann Lee)". That is, new environments for new evolutions of the inner consciousness (See 1 Corinthians 15:44 and 2 Corinthians 5:1).

29. We believe the resurrection has no reference to dead matter, but is wholly spiritual, wrought in the soul and is consummated by walking in newness of life (See Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 15:37, 1 Corinthians 15:50, John 11:25 and Revelation 20:4-5). Shall they not know, who have arisen?

30. Though for reasons apparent in the record, the Bible is esteemed superior to most books, we believe that Divine inspiration and revelation are not confined to any book, climate, age, nor race of people, but are given wherever and whenever needed to accomplish a Divine purpose (See Acts 2:17 and Isaiah 55:10-11). The Bible is a record of the purpose and dealings of the Eternal Spirit, to raise a selected branch of the human family (See Genesis 18:18-19) into higher and purer degrees of moral and religious development, until it could produce the perfect man and model Teacher in the person of Jesus, the Nazarene (See Isaiah 11, Isaiah 60:21, Zechariah 3:8, Jeremiah 23:5, Jeremiah 23:15, Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:47). Thence onward to the formation of a Royal Priesthood, a nation of Spiritual Teachers, Saviors like Jesus, their Elder Brother and Leader. That by their ministrations in both worlds, all families of the earth shall be blessed (See Obadiah 1:21, Revelation 5:9-10, 1 Peter 2:9, Jeremiah 3:15, Isaiah 30:20, Isaiah 61:6, Isaiah 61:9-11, Malachi 2:7, John 20:17 and Romans 8:29). Who are Christ's Elect, the few who enter the straight gate and narrow way and are chosen from the many called to be one with him as he is one with the Father and to sit down with him in his throne, if they be not those Prophets, Teachers and Saviors? Who are the 144,000 Virgins who follow the Lamb wherever he goes? The twelve times 12,000 sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, who are given authority over the nations (See Revelation 2:26), if they are not these same people constituting the general Assembly of the Church of the first-born in Heaven and on Earth? Ho, all ye teachers and people who wish to know the uplifting, conquering power of the true Christ and to prosper his cause in the earth for the redemption of human minds from error, come join this Order and live the life that Jesus lived! The Spirit and the Bride say come and let him that hears say come, and whosoever will, let him take of the fountain of the water of life freely.

31. We believe that Christ is the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. That he is "The Lord from heaven, a life giving Spirit", with which every true disciple is Anointed. That he is the image of the invisible God and Son of His love. That he is the effulgence of the Father's glory and the character of His substance (1 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Corinthians 15:45-47, Colossians 1:13-15 and Hebrews 1:2-3). Jesus was the chosen vessel in and by whom this Anointing Spirit was manifested to the world as the spiritual Bridegroom. Jesus was the first in our knowledge, that surrendered his own will so completely as to be cut off from and crucified to the life of the world, until this Anointing Holy Spirit became his life and enabled him to say, "I and my Father are one. The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do. I do always those things that please Him." In this also he is our pattern. Ann Lee was the first woman that, to our knowledge, followed this pattern so closely as to become the manifestor of Sophia, the Wisdom of God, in the character of the Spiritual Bride in Christ, our Helper. The spiritual Bridegroom and Bride, we regard as the Father and Mother of all children of the New Creation (See John 1:33, John 14:16-18, Proverbs 8:20-30, Isaiah 54, Jeremiah 31:22, Jeremiah 33:15-16, Micah 4:8-13 and Revelation 12:1).

32. We do not believe in mysteries that admit of no rational explanation. We do believe in using our reason and unbiased judgment to test all spirits and spirit manifestations claiming our attention; also testing all doctrines and revelations represented to us as coming from a Divine source.

We believe that the New Testament contains more Divine truth and less mixture of human error than any book of its size written by mortal hands (See 1 John 4:1, Luke 12:57, 1 Corinthians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Matthew 13:11-23 and Isaiah 1:18). “Reason together”; not to oppose and confute, but to learn and communicate the truth of life.

Shaker Communities

THE PROPHECY

A Worldwide Kingdom of God and Zion of His Likeness on Earth (Daniel 2:44).

FOUNDER

Ann Lee, the Bride of Christ (1736-1784) of Manchester, England.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Virgin Purity, Peace, Justice and Love

Expressed Through: Celibate Life, Complete Confession and Forsaking of all Sin,
Non Resistance, Community of Goods and Divine Order.

BELIEFS

Duality of the Deity, Father and Mother God (Power and Wisdom). The Mighty Dual Spirit,
Creator of Life, Light, Truth and Love. Duality of the Christ Spirit, as manifested by Jesus Christ
and Ann Lee, Immortal Life, Progress of the Soul, Faithfulness, Lawfulness,
Equality of the Genders, Equality in Labor, Equality in Property, Temperance in all things,
Justice and Kindness to all Living Beings.

GOVERNMENT

The Head of the Shaker Order is Christ.
Represented in a Dual Order of Leaders, Ministry Elders and Trustees.

COMMUNITY

Serious Minded and Competent individuals who vow to never deny
the Father God, the Mother Wisdom, the Son Jesus Christ or the Daughter Ann Lee.

SHAKER MOTTO

Hands to work, and Hearts to God.—ANN LEE

Zion's Center Of Union

