

CONSTITUTION OF THE OBERLIN NON-RESISTANCE SOCIETY

Formed June 18th, 1840

We whose names are hereunto annexed, believing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ inculcates the duty of peace and good-will – of gentleness, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness on all men – and of returning good for evil – love for hatred – kindness for abuse – mercy for injustice, in all cases and circumstances of life; and wishing to promote these principles of the Gospel – to seek further light for ourselves, and to communicate light to others, do form ourselves into a society by adopting the following

CONSTITUTION.

Art. 1st. This society shall be called the Oberlin Non-Resistance Society.

Art. 2nd. The members of this society believe that all wars are anti-christian – that governments sustained by force, and acting upon the principles of retaliation, must be left to other hands than the disciples of Jesus – that the weapons of the Christian's warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Our work is not to control men by force, but to win them to the obedience of the Gospel by love, forbearance, and self-sacrifice – not to leave the evangelizing of the world to engage in any plan for controlling men which still leaves them rebels against the law of God. If we may not "avenge ourselves," we may not employ any other arm to avenge us or to protect our persons and property than Him who has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." We believe that order and law are better than anarchy even among rebels against God; yet we may not stoop to maintain them with *their carnal weapons*, but strive to bring them back to their allegiance to God – that we must submit to the "powers that be," and "obey magistrates," except when their requirements conflict with God's laws; when we are meekly to endure the penalty of disobedience "threatening them not." We believe that parental authority is the only human authority approved by God; and that Christians are to render allegiance only to God, not to man – hence we may not employ violence in restraining sin or promoting holiness among men; nor take any part in military services; nor assist in the execution of penal enactments; but bear all things for Christ's sake, boldly testifying against all strife and sin, wherever they are found.

Art. 3rd. Any person adopting the above sentiments may become a member of this society by signing this Constitution.

Art. 4th. The officers of this society shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, who, together with three others, shall compose the Executive Committee. These officers shall be annually elected, and shall perform the duties usually devolving on such officers.

Art. 5th. This society shall hold an annual meeting on the 1st Tuesday in May, when the officers shall be chosen, the secretary and treasurer shall report, and such other business shall be transacted as shall be deemed expedient. They shall also hold quarterly meetings at such time and place as the Executive Committee may direct. At each of these meetings one or more addresses shall be delivered. Special meetings may be called when necessary.

Art. 6th. This Constitution may be amended at any annual meeting of the society by a vote of two-thirds of the members present.

Officers of the Society

REV. IRA SMITH, President

REV. GEO. NEEDHAM, V. President

JNO. ORVIS, Secretary

J. H. BYRD, Treasurer

Executive Committee

W. B. Orvis

Dea. Nehemiah Brown

Dea. P. P. Pease

Declaration of Sentiments adopted by the Oberlin Non-Resistance Society

The undersigned, having formed themselves into a society for the promotion of peace on earth, and good will among men, deem it a duty devolving on them to make a declaration of their sentiments.

1st. We believe that the precepts of Christ forbid all resistance of our fellow men by physical force – that forgiveness of injuries is the unconditional duty of every man – that Christians may not take upon themselves authority or responsibility to do otherwise – that men in stations of power can never be justified in the use of carnal weapons while it is wrong to employ them in a private capacity – that the Christian's work is

not to coerce and punish men as “ministers of wrath,” but to suffer and die for them as ministers of mercy.

2nd. We believe that the gospel prohibits all wars and fighting, whether offensive or defensive; whether between individuals or nations – that it prohibits all preparations for them, whether they be military systems, fortifications, navies, standing armies, or requisitions for military services – that it condemns all literature that tends to inspire a love of military glory and all appeals to patriotism, as calculated to inflame national pride and excite to jealousy and war.

3rd. We believe that, as Christians, we may not acknowledge allegiance to any human organizations, civil or ecclesiastical, which are sustained by violence, because they are usurpations of the prerogatives of God, to whom, alone, we owe counter and supreme allegiance – because they destroy man’s free agency, and, by exercising the power of life and death over men, they become the arbiters of men’s eternal destinies – because they are founded in blood, and upheld by continual disobedience to the laws of Christ – because God has not given His children the right to dictate and control one another against the will of either – because, in short, the civil and ecclesiastical powers of this world, based on violence, are not of Christ, but are to be consumed and superseded by that Kingdom which shall have no end.

Wherefore, we may not hold any legislative, judicial, or executive office under them, where we shall come under obligation to execute penal enactments, nor vote that others may – we may not engage in law-suits, nor appeal to such powers, either for the punishment of evil-doers, or for any redress of grievances; we are rather to suffer ourselves to be defrauded, while we submit and “threaten not.”

Trusting to the invincible power of kindness, which begets kindness in return, and desiring to exercise that benevolence which enkindles benevolence in others, we fear not to repose confidence in God alone, as our Protector and Guide, while we are subjects of His Kingdom.

4th. We believe that the gospel is opposed to no conventional compact, into which men may enter for the promotion of any objects of benevolence, provided no compulsory power be assumed by such compact – nor does the gospel teach that God does not prefer the existence of human organizations based on violence rather than anarchy – nor that He has not so constituted man, and so ordered in His counsels and providence, that when man revolts from Him, he will seek authority over, and protection from, his fellow men.

The only alternative left to man is allegiance to God or allegiance to man. We do not hence infer that God approvingly ordains “the powers that be,” but simply, that by them He causes selfishness to counteract selfishness, and sin to restrain sin. We believe that we are bound to submit

to the ordinances of man for the Lord’s sake, and not resist them; but obey human rulers, as far as they require of us nothing contrary to the law of God. When we cannot render obedience, we will meekly submit to the penalty, trusting in God for succor. We are not to use carnal weapons in opposing the powers of earth, but all the opposition we may make to violence, or sin in any form, must be in the spirit and after the example of Christ. We believe that God ordains, in one sense, all the powers that exist in the universe – that “He sets up the basest of men” as “His ministers of wrath,” and as much gives Satan his power to deceive the nations as Pilate to crucify Christ, or the Chaldeans to destroy Israel. But we do not hence infer that these powers rightfully exist as destroying powers; but we learn that all their deeds of violence were black rebellion against God.

5th. We deem it our duty to strive to impress Christians with the truth, that there is no affinity between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of Christ – between the principles of worldly, selfish men, and those which Christ has inculcated – between the measures pursued by sinners for their own advantage and protection, and those to be pursued by Christians for the salvation of the world. The Christian’s work is the spiritual renovation of the world. Outward restraints and penal enactments never purify the heart. The experience of six thousand years attests this. The gospel declares that wickedness must be overcome with righteousness, by returning good for evil – mercy for injustice – kindness for cruelty – blessing for cursing – forgiveness for injury.

Such then, are the Christian’s weapons – such is his course to pursue. Although, while pursuing this course, he is beset with difficulties on every side – with persecution, scourging, reviling and death – still he is not to falter. These are his portion. His master endured the same. His God is his ark of refuge. Whether he lives or dies, his abiding place is the munition of rocks,¹ even the Almighty; and all is well.

With the sincerest love of truth, the highest integrity of purpose, and the fullest confidence in God, that He will give ultimate triumph to these principles, however much they may be opposed, we hereunto affix our names.

¹ A fortress made of rock – see Isaiah 33:16.

Appeal to Christians in behalf of Non-Resistant Principles

Beloved Brethren and Sisters in Christ:

In the name of Christ we would approach you at this time, for the purpose of calling your attention to what we deem a very important part of the Gospel of our common Lord and Master.

We have observed, with deep emotions of grief, the general prevalence of sentiments and practices, in respect to the law of love and peace, in our view, highly displeasing to the benevolent heart of our risen Savior. We allude to the long-cherished opinions and customs of those, who, while they profess to be the followers of the Great Prince of Peace, do nevertheless, pursue a course of conduct entirely inconsistent with the spirit of our Master, and wholly at variance with their profession as His children and His representatives to a strife-loving world.

We entreat you to examine this subject still more carefully and prayerfully than you have yet done; and consider whether you have not mistaken the spirit of Christ, while you have justified His followers, in resorting to any other means for restraining the wickedness of man, than those of love, forbearance, and forgiveness. We are aware that the whole world is against the pure and self-sacrificing religion of Jesus Christ, yet we cannot conceive how we shall be able to overcome it and its principles, if we must resort to the same means of subduing it that its subjects employ in subduing each other, and in striving against Christian principles. *They* resist the gospel by violence and malice, and seek to destroy the saints of God as they do their vilest enemies. And can *we* expect to subdue the enmity of the world by a resort to such measures? Nay, verily, unless hatred will beget love in the hearts of the wicked!

We know that Jesus Christ will, at last, come out in judgment against the incorrigible and reprobate, yet we do not hence infer that we have a license to inflict wrath on evil-doers who are, rather, God's enemies, than ours. But, on the other hand, we do insist that the example of Jesus Christ, while *on earth*, is our model; and that He, in His *life in the flesh*, has shown us the best way to overcome the enmity of the carnal heart, and bring it into submission to the holy law of God. And we appeal to the conscience of any Christian to answer in the fear of God, whether the Lord has made him a judge or ruler over his fellow men, either in church or state? Whether he has license to destroy men's lives or save them? Whether he is to overcome evil with evil, or evil with good?

Do not Infidels scoff and blaspheme God, when they see *professed* Christians warring and striving among themselves, or winking at, and

sustaining, those who practice such things? They know that the gospel of Jesus Christ justifies such practices under *no* circumstances; therefore they arraign us as hypocrites, or mock at all religion as a baseless dream.

A warring Christianity, in death, sent Voltaire to hell; and in life furnished him with arguments against *all* religion, which a warring priesthood in his day could not ward off, and thereby plunged millions into the blackness of infidelity, and all the horrors of the second death!

The sword is the chosen instrument of Mahomedans² for spreading their vile imposture; and are not Christians on a level with them, if they also rely on the sword as their protector and trust?

Have not Pagans more to *fear* from the introduction of a war-making Christianity among them, than they can *hope* from all the light and happiness it will bring?

Are not the efforts of the church at present, and have they not been for a long time past, paralyzed, both at home and abroad, by a blind trust in the arm of flesh, rather than in the power and trust of the living God?

Is not God almost forgotten by His people, while they go forth professedly as sheep among wolves, yet trusting in their own power and skill for protection; and being ashamed to acknowledge God as their only protector against the wrath of fierce, cruel, and rebellious men, lest they be considered rash, and thereby suffer reproach for the name of Jesus?

Why is it considered safer and wiser for sheep and doves to attempt to resist and destroy wolves and vultures in certain circumstances, than to exhibit their own meek and unoffending spirit, and thus by their intrinsic loveliness and winning power, change the wolves themselves to lambs? Beloved friends, do you not see that nothing else than this will effect the desired change? Violence will not melt the hardened heart. Military power and protection will not convert the world, nor will it enable missionaries to do it. Punishment does not subdue and reform men – it never did, and it never will. Nothing else than the grace of God, exhibited in the dying agonies of a crucified Jesus, dying *for* and *by* His enemies, can accomplish this. Are not we His representatives? And may we not claim the same privilege? May not we also die *for* and *by* our enemies, rather than injure or destroy them?

Does not benevolence require that we should take the most effectual course to melt their hearts to the obedience of the gospel? Is *that* benevolence which stoops to punish those who injure, or threaten to injure, us or our friends, while by consenting to suffer and die for them, we may

² Muslims. This is true of all extremists.

convince them of our love, and the love of God to them, and thus be the means of winning them to Christ?

If our enemy hungers, may we not feed him instead of shooting him? If he thirsts, may we not give him drink instead of hanging him? And instead of going forth to convert the world under cover of cannons, walls, and guards, may we not take our lives in our hands and go forth trusting in the Lord Almighty alone? Benevolence needs no gibbets or prisons. Love needs no warriors or hangmen for its protection. Then let us learn to be mighty through God alone, to the pulling down of strongholds. If we die in the onset, still victory will be ours. The motto of the world is "Victory *or* death." The Christian's is *Victory in death!* Our leader overcame the world by suffering it to destroy His life; and so may we. If we would be like our Master, we must commit ourselves to Him that "judges righteously," and "threaten not" while we suffer. Thus did Christ, "leaving an example that we should follow in His steps." Dare we imitate Him, and leave those who may injure us in the hands of Him who will, in the last day, render to every man according to his works?

If we stop to build walls of protection, and endeavor to chain the selfishness and opposition of man by handcuffs and manacles, we shall find that Christ has no sympathy with us, and men will see that we have no trust in God; and our progress in converting the world will be, as it has been in time past, in inverse ratio with the efforts we make for that purpose.

If our designs are merciful, and our measures Christ-like, we need not fear what man can do unto us, nor stand upon our defense, like those selfish ones who tremble, lest they may be injured by those who are alike selfish. It will not increase the opposition of the objects of our goodwill, because we use no menaces to frighten them into an acknowledgement of the truth, or to hear it spoken; nor will they lessen their opposition if we approach them with an array of arms, battlements, and physical penalties, threatening devastation and death if they interfere with our rights and interests.

Dear Christian friends, how long will it be, think you, ere the bright and glorious dawn of the Millennium will usher in upon our ill-fated world; when weapons of violence shall be no more, if Christians are to be the last who lay aside those instruments of death; and if *they* are to continue their use, till all the wicked have become mild and peaceful? Is that a virtue, which only ceases to resent injuries because provocations cease, and only ceases to resist evil because there is no evil to resist?

What begets violence, but violence? And how can strife and contention be driven from the earth, except Christians first lay aside all the ensigns and characteristics of such a spirit, and show to the world the superior excellency of the principles of love and forgiveness?

Surely, it would not be unsafe for the world were we, and all saints, to lay aside carnal weapons, and act upon the principles of self-sacrificing

benevolence. Nor could it be unsafe for one-third, or two-thirds, or *all* of this or any other nation to act upon the same principles. Why, then, do you fear the general spread of Non-Resistant Principles? Are they not such as must precede and usher in the Millennium? Are you not preventing the dawn of that heavenly day, while you oppose them? Are you afraid the wicked will not be protected, if you cease to defend them with the sword? Let them become benevolent, and instead of even wishing such protection, they will be ready to suffer and die with us for their enemies. If they remain rebellious, they must perish – for God's kingdom will break in pieces all other kingdoms, and rule over all.

Then let us not cling to them and pray for their continuance, but pray for the coming of that kingdom which shall consume them all and stand forever.

We leave you, beseeching that you will pray much over this important subject; and let candor, and a desire to know the truth, possess your minds; while we will pray that the God of Truth will lead us all from every error and sin, into the effulgent blaze of the gospel light – into *that* liberty wherewith Christ makes us free; that this world may be speedily redeemed from all violence and iniquity, and that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

DISCLAIMER AND PROTEST

*From the Oberlin Non-Resistance Society,
addressed to the Faculty of the
Oberlin Collegiate Institute*

Allow us in the first place to state briefly why we act at this time, as we propose to do, for the promotion of the principles set forth by this society. We do not desire to create unhealthy excitement, or to magnify in importance the principles we maintain above others of paramount importance. But believing them to be of no small moment, although almost entirely overlooked by the great body of Christians, we feel obligated to make an effort to remove misapprehension, and to awaken appropriate interest in regard to them. We feel it is unjust to ascribe the unchristian spirit manifested by some, who sustain our views in part, to these principles, since many other precious truths have been eclipsed by the unholy conduct of those who have sustained them. We are greatly grieved to see such a spirit exhibited by any who attempt to defend the truth in any

form, as thereby the cause of Christ is dishonored, and, as you all deeply feel, the way of truth is in many ways “evil spoken of.” Yet we may not reject the truth because others abuse it; but endeavor, by precept and example, to exhibit its true nature and influence, thereby stopping the mouths of gainsayers and rebuking the repulsive censoriousness of rash zealots.

We do not conceive that wisdom exclusively belongs to us on the subject of peace and non-resistance, nor that all who differ from us are the “wise and prudent” from whom all such wisdom has been hidden; neither do we wish to entrench ourselves behind any refuge to parry off the arrows of the truth lest our sentiments be disproved, for truth is the thing we seek after and desire to promote; and be that where it may, we pray for light and candor to receive light; that by the truth, not only we, but all over whom we exert an influence, may be made free and fully purified. Here we wish to disclaim and protest several things in order, which are either charged upon us as evil, or urged against our principles.

1st. We are not partisans. We ride no hobby³; nor do we adopt and inculcate our principles because any man, or class of men, do the same; nor do we wish to have our principles confounded with those which may be nearly akin to ours in some respects, but we desire that they may rest upon their own foundation, and that foundation alone.

2nd. We are not anarchists. We disclaim all intention or desire of waging a warfare against Human Governments as such, for we believe them to be “ordained of God” in such a sense, that by them God determines to make a lesser evil destroy a greater one. Therefore, we have nothing to do directly in laboring for their subversion; but our work is to inculcate the principles of peace as apposed to violence, that we may induce all to reject the principles and practices of earthly powers, and come into the peaceful and everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ. Hence it would be as reasonable to brand a true Christian church as a no-government society, because its principles carried out will remove all violence from the earth, as to give us that epithet, while we are only laboring to accomplish the very thing the church is destined to accomplish.

3rd. We are not disorganizers. We disclaim all fellowship or sympathy with any who would wish to upturn the just foundations of civil society or moral order, as we sincerely aim to promote both, and, as we believe, in the only consistent and Christian way. We do protest against control exercised by men, over men, by means of violence, as not Christ-like. Yet we do not expect, nor do we labor, to induce men to cease

controlling men by force while they remain selfish and carnal; as God, by permitting them to do this, causes selfishness to punish itself, and sin to restrain sin; thus “making the wrath of man to praise Him.” Our object is to induce *Christians* to cease striving to coerce men, and leave the work of violence to those who *are violent*, and not to stoop to maintain human laws among rebels against God by human weapons; but to “separate themselves from all these things,” because they are unchristian means for restoring this lost world to its rightful Sovereign and Protector. Although we fully believe that God overrules the selfish ambition of human rulers in restraining some forms of vice, and in furthering some of His designs of benevolence towards men; yet we dare not “do evil that good may come,” and we protest against regarding Omniscient Wisdom in pursuing this course, as at all sanctioning the violence of human rulers. We do not believe that the spread of principles opposed to all violence among men, and requiring all to act on the principles of self-sacrificing benevolence, will prove disorganizing or dangerous in the least.

4th. We protest, however, against confounding civil order and society with human government, as administered by coercion; for we consider them either directly or approximately opposites; the one being simply mutual agreement with social regulations among equals, which are the life-springs of society, and will exist when strife is known no more; the other placing compulsory and judicial power in the hands of fallible men, thereby destroying the free agency of the governed and requiring allegiance to man, where God alone has a just claim to the homage. We know that God has so constituted men that when they revolt from Him and refuse to be governed and protected by the principles of benevolence, they will seek dominion over one another and protection from each other; so that the only alternative left to man is the choice between divine government and protection, and human government and protection. The choice is not between human government and anarchy, but between the laws of God and man; the one enslaving free agents to the caprice of mortals; the other setting the soul free in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Which shall we prefer?

5th. We protest against nullifying or restricting Christ’s laws in their application to men in any condition or circumstance of life, whether they be in private or public stations; whether they be kings, presidents, judges, law-makers (so called), or private citizens; because Christ’s precepts are given without personal or conditional restrictions, and hence must be universal in their application. We wish not to distort these precepts, nor to apply them differently from their legitimate bearings, as the Lawgiver Himself designed; but we find them nowhere contradicted or qualified in the New Testament, nor do we find anything there implying that any such distinct responsibilities rest upon one class of society, as will justify that class in

³ We have no favorite occupation or subject of talk.

evading any of those precepts, however much some men may lay claim to such pre-emption. Hence we protest against men's giving or receiving authority to violate that very plain and unrestricted precept, "Resist not evil." Before men will be justified in doing this, God must give us another Dispensation, reversing the tenor of the law delivered on Mount Olivet.

6th. We protest against those contradictory interpretations of scripture by which men are justified in acting, *in certain circumstances*, as positive precepts forbid. One plain precept cannot be annihilated by inferences drawn from others, nor by admissions of facts or cognizance of relations, while the language commonly construed to justify such a course is not necessarily so construed; as (e.g.) the passage requiring subjection to higher powers, which some regard as justifying the use of the sword; but which we understand as requiring simple non-resistance to them, because Christians may not fight, and these powers are only to be allowed to inflict God's vengeance on evil-doers, as did the king of Assyria. It is likewise so in regard to those requiring the payment of tribute, which some regard as sanctioning the extortion and the power that demands it; but which we regard as simply teaching us to "give up the cloak" and all we have, rather than resist even a naked aggression.

7th. We protest against confounding *wrong* principles with the abuse of *right*, whereby men are justified in a course of continued disobedience to God, and of perpetual injury to each other. "The tree is known by its fruit;" and, as the claiming of right to govern men by coercion, while it may result in a relative good, is really a positive evil, since all who govern men could be engaged in a better cause; and as the claiming of this right has led to all the anarchy and bloodshed the earth has ever witnessed; while *self-defense* or *protection of rights* has ever been the ostensible motive for resorting to violence in controlling men; and since we know of no human ruler since the days of Christ, who has really "*reigned in righteousness*," we therefore conclude that the governing power over men in the hands of men, instead of being an abuse of a right principle (as it is said to be when it results in extreme wickedness), is, in all cases and circumstances, wrong if sustained by violence, unless especially enjoined by God Himself. Let human rulers, then, show their commission.

8th. We protest against Christians seeking authority over men, as though they were competent to rule them better than others; since all such authority is a great snare to its possessor; and all aspirants after power *think* that *they* can do better than others; and all the means necessary to attain such power are carnal and selfish (witness our election scenes, and the frequent bloody revolutions when kings are dethroned or new ones crowned); and moreover, all Christians are expressly forbidden to "exercise authority" over one another; hence we consider it as grievously misplaced philanthropy for Christians to seek stations of power among men, or to

claim the *right* to do so, or to second the aims of those who do seek such authority. God sent not His Son to reign in an earthly kingdom, nor to destroy the lives of His enemies; nor has He made Christians "judges or dividers" over men, for "all ye are brethren," and our work is to enthrone God as King of all. Saints are not "ministers of wrath," but of mercy; nor are they "to avenge," but "to forgive;" they are not to use discretionary power in punishing crimes, but to "bear all things," leaving the execution of vengeance "to whom vengeance belongs." How entirely, then, do they forget what "spirit they are of," and mistake their high and holy calling, when they set themselves to punish their enemies; and how absurd is their inference of the right to do thus from the fact that God punishes His enemies, as though a child might claim the right to chastise his brother because his father did the same.

9th. We protest against Judaizing Christianity by introducing the penal code of the Mosaic Dispensation into the more perfect and benign statute-book of the Christian Dispensation. The sacrificial laws of the Jews have been fulfilled, and the "scepter has departed from Judah," and now Christ alone is Lawgiver, Judge, and Avenger in Israel. He began His reign by repealing the retaliatory laws of Moses, and giving totally different instructions in regard to the treatment of enemies and sinners from what had previously been given.

10th. We protest against uniting "Church and State" by placing temporal power in the hands of Christians and thus setting the Church in battle array against the world, armed with the same carnal weapons and trusting to the same instrumentalities for accomplishing their purposes of benevolence that the world employs in pursuing its selfish and ambitious schemes. We do not believe that we can fight sin out of the world by sword and spear, nor vote it out by numbers. We abhor that species of *Materialism* which makes the progress of truth to depend on majorities, and which supposes that righteousness can be promoted in the earth by arming Christians with weapons of offence and defense. Having long denied the "divine right" of kings to rule men, as all other "*republicans*" have done; we cannot perceive that *Christians* have any more of a "divine right" to rule than the "kings of the earth" have, who claim it; and as for such a right existing in the "necessity of the case," we are sure that there is no such thing as an "*absolute necessity*" for any man to govern men; but the necessity, if it exists, is wholly a *relative one*, occasioned by rebellion against God, and the "must needs be" in the case is as real as "wars" and "offences" are necessary to precede and prepare the way for the Millennium; and the same "woe" will be pronounced against the "princes of this world" who destroy their fellow-beings, uncommissioned, as against those who cause the "offences" and "wars" which will precede Christ's coming.

11th. We protest against considering the relations of *dependence* and *superiority* among men, as giving one man authority to control another against his will; since all are equal in that respect, being of one family, and our relations to each other entirely mutual. Hence one man has as much right to control another as the other has to control him; each being solely responsible to God; so that no one has a right to dictate to another, and use compulsion to secure obedience, as this would destroy his free agency, and perhaps (as all men may err) force him to commit sin or destroy him while the fault was all on the side of the aggressor. God has not left men to the action of such a principle as this, which, if carried out, would lead to universal anarchy and ruin by setting “every man’s hand against his brother.” But He claims the right Himself alone to dictate to men, and to be the executioner of deserved wrath. No man has a right to destroy another for sinning against God, unless Omniscient Wisdom directs; for finite creatures cannot know how and when it would be best to do it. Moreover, since utility is the ground of all expediency, and God alone can discern when it would be useful to make men His “ministers of wrath,” or can justify them in punishing rebels against Him; for man to claim the right to do it, or the wisdom to discern the expediency of doing it without this infallible guidance, is presumption and arrogance in the extreme. Such presumption and arrogance, by bringing men’s minds and interests into collision, has been the fruitful source of all the strife and wars with which the earth has been filled.

12th. We protest against all legal appeals for redress of wrongs, from whatever source they may come; as we believe it is better to “take wrong” and “suffer ourselves to be defrauded,” meekly overcoming the injurer by patience and forbearance. This we consider *Christian expediency!* Moreover, may it not be considered *wrong* to trust in an arm of flesh, in *material force*, or to make use of it in destroying or restraining the wicked and in promoting righteousness, while there is a “more excellent way”? The best way is always the *right* way, and the right way is always *expedient*. We are bound to adopt the most effectual course to prevent sin and promote righteousness; therefore, fleshly instrumentalities are neither lawful nor expedient “means” for Christians to use in overcoming and restraining evil-doers who seek to defraud them, or in any way to injure them. If they were, brute force, majorities, equipments, standing armies, etc. etc. would be requisite for the promotion of peace, love, and holiness on earth. But God saves by many or few, not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit alone. Hence, it is vain to think of chaining men’s bodies for the good of their souls, or to prevent their evil influence upon *others* till we can secure *their* conversion; for “lambs” have no such course to pursue with the “wolves;” but when God sees it necessary, He will “shut down the gate” and the “*wicked shall not be.*” The consistent course, then, for

Christians is to “fret not because of evil-doers,” but imitate Him who “threatened not” and who taught us to yield the “cloak also” to him who should “sue us at the law and take away our coat.”

13th. We protest against offering menaces to others, whereby the proud and vengeful passions of men are excited, and attacks upon the menacers are provoked and invited; as is done when nations arm for defense and establish military schools and navies; when they raise armies, organize militia, and require military drills and training; and when private persons arm themselves for their own protection. The mind of man⁴ is so constituted that it will not assault the unoffending and peaceable, when the peaceable are known to be such, unless the conscience of the aggressor is aroused by some truth or pointed rebuke coming from a heart filled with love, and then it is better to be “dumb” and passive, while the “wicked rage,” than to “seek to save life” by destroying the aggressor. “Trust in the Lord, for vain is the help of man.”

14th. We protest against the presumption that “resistance of evil” is necessary to our safety in “extreme cases,” and that the work of restraining evil-doers is then to be taken into our hands. The doctrine that the violent, ambitious, or covetous man, who attempts to injure us, ceases to be a man – thus dehumanizing a being endowed with reason – we consider abhorrent and pernicious in the extreme. To treat such a one as a “beast of prey” is to break the injunction “resist not evil” at the very time that obedience is needed, and at the only time it can be a virtue. It was this very reason, “*they know not what they do,*” that induced Jesus Christ to pray “*Father, forgive them!*” This shows us that forgiveness and passive, lamb-like submission, is every Christian’s duty in regard to those who may injure him, or attempt to injure him; however fierce and cruel his murderers may be. “Jesus Christ left us an example that we should follow His steps.” So did holy Stephen, and all the other holy martyrs. They “resisted not.” Hence, we do not deem it unwise and unsafe to trust in God, and “resist not” both in “*extreme cases*” and at any other time. If we die, God will see to it that His name is glorified; and if we live, we shall live with a conscience “void of offence.” We do not pretend that we have any *life-warrant* that we shall not die; but in humble submission to God, we would say, “Father, Your only will, and not ours, be done!”

All past experience, however, teaches us that non-resistance is safer than the opposite, both for the aggressor and the injured, if life is to be esteemed the criterion of safety. However much men may have suffered from a misconception of God’s law, in some instances, and from a blind

⁴ The authors assume some degree of reason and sanity.

zeal of formal devotedness to God, in which God would not protect them; we insist that the promises of God, the laws of mind, and all past experience are in favor of undeviating non-resistance.

Lastly. We protest against silence in regard to the principles and obligations here set forth. Shall Christians hold their peace, or oppose peace-makers, while outrage, anarchy, and desolation continue their bloody march through the earth? Shall idolatrous subjects of kings and emperors continue to fawn and cringe, and worship their fellow-creatures *robed in royalty*, more than they worship God? Shall political strife, party spirit, and a degrading subservience to the desires of ambitious office-seekers, which sometimes exhibits itself in a horrible mockery of sacred things, continue to eat up the piety of the Church in this land; and to blind, debase, and harden the hearts of sinners, who think of nothing but the name of the man they desire to rule them? What acceptable sacrifice to God is the result of the political campaigns yearly witnessed in our land? What office-holder has an eye single to the glory of God in performing the functions of his station? What office-seeker or abettor of such carries Christ with him in his efforts after power and honor among men? If half the time and zeal thus spent was spent in choosing God for their King, would they not be much better ruled and protected? Shall Christians strive, and unbelievers scoff, and fill the earth with sighs, and groans, and mourning still longer in consequence of the ruinous sentiments and practices of Christ's disciples, who *ought* to be "harmless" and "without spot" in a "perverse generation"? How long shall earth continue one vast "Aceldema,"⁵ one slaughter-house of brethren; while the *followers* of the "Prince of Peace" calmly look on, smile, and assist in the bloody ravages therein continually perpetrated? Is it not our duty to "cry aloud and spare not"? Has not the time come for us to cleanse our skirts from the guilt of blood, and to *speak out*, till the fatal enginery of war and strife are laid aside; till peace is proclaimed throughout all the earth, and good-will spreads to every family of man; till the millennial glory shall break in upon the earth, and Jehovah shall reign King of Kings, and all the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose dominion shall be without end?



⁵ The field bought with the money that Judas received for betraying Jesus.