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What Advantages Do the Shakers Possess Today by Being an Independent Community?

Through the pleasant separation from secular society, the Shakers possess the advantages of a self-sufficient community and a quiet, isolated existence within which to exercise their beliefs and value system. To a certain extent, one could establish a claim that the Shakers were fortunate to have fled England in the late 18th century; they acquired the land needed to later synthesize an autonomous community, from which they continue to grow and perpetuate their customs and culture. Owning and administering their own land allows the Shakers to implement a communal “pooling of goods” and thereby live in what they refer to as the “true spirit of Christian poverty” (Maine Shakers). The members of the Shaker community “give up all material things for the sake of the Gospel” to prevent “a person’s possessions [from coming] between him[self] and God,” and such a lifestyle would not be possible without the intentional sovereignty established by their leader Mother Ann Lee (Maine Shakers). Additionally, the Shaker’s isolation allows for a financial aspect to their community in the sense that they are capable of producing revenue through the fabrication of goods and the education of tourists and visitors. This yields a twofold advantage: the revenue is used for a communal growth and maintenance, while the production of goods aids the Shakers in abiding by their principle “put your hands to work, and give your hearts to God” (Maine Shakers).

Besides these physical benefits of isolation, the Shakers can also attest extensively to the spiritual pros of their individual community. Possessing a private space to worship and promote their beliefs has led to an incorporation of the ideals of work and worship within everyday life. The Shakers worship three times a day and work for an aggregate seven hours per day, with essentially only meals and sleep consuming the remainders of their free time (Maine Shakers). Without a unifying community free from foreign influence, the Shakers may not be able to economically maintain their current model of simple, daily life. Furthermore, this independence grants them the means to remain pacifistic people, as their beliefs state they must be. They are able to, on a daily basis, live in “the practice of universal Brotherhood as well as equality for all” with their brothers and sisters around them for all worships, meals, and night hours (Maine Shakers). This communal unity in work and religion forges a bond of love among the brothers and sisters of the Shaker community that aligns majestically with the self-description of their intense, religiously-grounded love as “the very cornerstone of Shakerism” (Maine Shakers).

When the Shaker community of today is viewed as a sum of the parts through which it has evolved and progressed along the centuries, one can certainly ascertain that this municipality is well-endowed from its humble beginnings as a young, intentional community. The Shakers of today are proprietors of vast expanses of acreage through which they perpetuate their beliefs and values by practicing communal property, chastity, work, and worship (Maine Shakers). They cement a true bond of love and family through the universal valuing of customs and pride in Shaker history. Evidently there are valuable principles and perspectives on life and fellowship to be observed in the contemporary Shaker society that are made sustainable for all men and women through the sovereignty of the Maine Shakers.

I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work. Peter George Plotas

Works Cited

"Home - Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village." *Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Nov. 2015. <http://maineshakers.com/>.