

For

Professor Charles Richmond Henderson.

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For

THE SPIRIT OF PHILANTHROPY AS DEVELOPED
IN THE MORMON CHURCH.

A.F. CARDON.

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Note: Much of the material given in this paper is not to be found in books of the Church. It is given from personal experiences of the writer's.

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IN SENATE
JANUARY 1, 1907.

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FOR THE YEAR
1906.

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THE SPIRIT OF PHILANTHROPY AS DEVELOPED
IN THE MORMON CHURCH.

One of the most remarkable social movements in America during the Nineteenth Century was the founding and growth of the so-called Mormon Church.* One associates much more readily with that peculiar people polygamy, hierarchy and even wild tales of lust and murder than virtue charity, industry and far-seeing management. Perhaps all these characteristics can be traced through the history of the Church; but certainly by the ^{impartial} ~~fair~~ observer seeking the causes of the virile growth of the Mormon communities these nobler attributes can clearly be distinguished. In fact, I can discern no other causes for this growth half so potent, aside from the natural resources of geographical environment, as those enumerated above. It is my purpose in this paper to follow the development of the charitable features of Mormonism as they related themselves to the life of this social movement.

The history of this people may be divided into two periods which I will designate as the Formative and the Constructive. The former extended from 1830 to 1844, from the organization of the Church in 1830 to the death of Joseph Smith in 1844. During these years Joseph Smith completely dominated the life of the Church. Claiming to act under divine inspiration, he dictated the tenets of the new faith and erected the framework of the organization. The Constructive Period extends from the death of

*The official name is the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Doc. & Cov. 1:15:4

THE STATE OF TEXAS

IN THE SENATE

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

MADE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SENATE, 1881

ALBUQUERQUE, N. M.: 1881

PRINTED BY THE SENATE

AND BY THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SENATE, 1881

THE HISTORY OF THE STATE, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE LAND OFFICE

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Joseph Smith to the present day. Until 1846 the people hovered ~~at~~ about their beautiful Nauvoo like a swarm of bees without its queen. The Church was sorely pressed. From all sides forces were being used to dislodge the strange people from their homes; and yielding to these steadily increasing, persistently hostile influences they launched into the unknown American desert, flung, as it ~~were~~ ^{were}, by the irresistible hatred and constant hostility of an irascible public opinion. This time, Brigham Young, a practical, materialistic leader, put his hand to the Mormon plow that was destined to turn the alkaline soil about the Inland Sea into the richest of irrigable fields. In hardly any walk of temporal life did Brigham Young fail to leave that great organizing influence which still manifests itself in the monuments of thriving cities and prosperous colonies.

To return now to a more intimate picture of the social life of the Formative Period. Joseph Smith claimed to have received gold plates from a hill in New York from which the Book of Mormon was written. He published this in 1829; in 1830, having a small following he organized the Church. At this time the tide of western movement was strong in the eastern states; and the few members of this new church were caught in the migration. As these people drifted in this turbulent tide of expansion they naturally adapted themselves to the unsettled life of the agricultural frontier. They possessed lands, gathered implements and stock, and sought to pursue the agricultural industry which was fast developing in the

those new western areas. But though they grew rapidly yet another factor entered their lives which greatly changed the natural course of their growth.

This new factor was the antagonism of nearly every people not in sympathy with their faith. What Joseph Smith lacked as a leader this persecution, in a large measure, supplied. Like sheep the ~~Saints~~ Saints huddled to their shepherd, looking to him for protection. Thus hemmed in as a unit in every village which they formed they accepted their common lot and became in reality a band of brethren dedicated to the purposes of their religious zeal. Their situation was much the same as the Primitive Church just after Christ. Joseph Smith commanded their absolute love and obedience. His chief immediate purpose was to find a home where he could gather his people and build a temple for the rituals of the new religion.

By this time the Church was fully organized along the same lines as the Primitive Church. Two Priesthoods- the Aaronic and the Melchisedec- held all power to conduct the affairs of the Church. Of these two the Melchisedec held the higher authority with offices of Elders, Seventies and High Priests; the Aaronic was composed of deacons, teachers and priests. From these two Priesthoods all officers of the Church were drawn. To better understand this organization I present the following outline:

I. General Officers.

1. The Presidency: President, 1st & 2nd Councillors.

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2. Twelve Apostles.

3. General Bishop of the Church.

II. The Stake, an indefinite territory.

1. Presidency: President, 1st & 2nd Councillors.

2. The High Council consisting of 12 High Priests.

III. The ward: A division of the Stake.

1. Bishopric: Bishop, 1st & 2nd Councillors.

2. Priests

3. Teachers.

4. Deacons.

For the purposes of this paper the position of the ward and the duties of the Bishopric are practically the only divisions of the Church that need be considered. Under the Bishop all activities of the social body are carried on, so that the ward may be called the social unit of the Mormon Church.

What was needed immediately by the Saints while still in New York, Ohio, Illinois and Missouri was numbers; and to the conversion of the peoples of all the earth, the new organization set its shoulder.* Elders were sent out into all the states and even to European countries. Necessarily this drain of able-bodied men meant a restriction of the annual production of the people, and naturally a partial impoverishment of the Church.†

The people brought into the new faith were as a rule of the poorer classes. While they perhaps seldom felt dire poverty, yet

* Doc. & Cov. 58:64
§ " " " 75:24

1. General Statement

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very often relief must have been sought of the leaders of the new movement.* This need of the poor, the relief of the families of missionaries, the support of the men actually engaged in Church ~~wa~~ work and the construction of contemplated temples and churches demanded a system of finance. It is characteristic of Joseph Smith and his associates that a communal plan was proposed; but it is also characteristic for all peoples to do practically the same thing under the same conditions. The Church was small, closely banded together and actuated by a zeal for their spiritual cause.

under the stress of circumstances Joseph Smith gave out a revelation which commanded that an organization be made "in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, that you may be equal in the bands of heavenly things; yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things; for if ye are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; wherefore a commandment I give unto you, to prepare and ~~eng~~ organize yourselves by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken."§

A communal plan was immediately effected at the head of which the General Bishop of the Church was placed. It is interesting to note that this official had had practically the same duties imposed upon him in May, 1831, when a revelation was promulgated by Joseph Smith. This revelation is the keynote to the communal

* Doc. & Cov. 42:30

§ " " " 78:3 - 6, 11.

very often rather than have been of the nature of a
movement. * This need at the post, the father of the nation
characterized, the support of the nation which engaged in the
with and a combination of different people and nations
demanded a system of finance. It is characteristic of Joseph Smith
and his associates that a financial plan was proposed, but it is
also characteristic for all people to be practically the same
thing with the same conditions. The church was small, almost non-
existent and covered by a coat for their spiritual needs.
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velation which contained that an organization be made in the
existing and establishing the rights of the members for the
poor of my people, ... that for may be equal in the world
of heavenly things; too, and earthly things also, for the co-
taining of heavenly things; for it is not equal in earthly
things; he cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;
..... therefore a government I have given you, in which you shall
exercise authority as a head or executive, and shall be called
of me.

A new way, the new dispensation of which at the present
time the church is in the midst of, is to be established
of more than this world and the things which are therein
depend upon him in the world, and a revelation was given of this
by Joseph Smith. This revelation is the source of the church

system and therefore I quote it nearly in full:

wherefore let my servant Edward Partridge (General Bishop), and those whom he has chosen, in whom I am well pleased, appoint unto this people their portion, every man equal according to their families, according to their circumstances and their wants and needs.

And let my servant Edward Partridge, when he shall appoint a man his portion, give unto him a writing that shall secure unto him his portion, that he shall hold it, even this right and this inheritance in the church, until he transgresses and is not accounted worthy by the voice of the church, according to the laws and covenants of the church, to belong to the church;

And if he shall transgress and is not accounted worthy to belong to the church, he shall not have power to claim that portion which he has consecrated unto the Bishop for the poor and the needy of my church; therefore, he shall not retain the gift, but shall only have claim on that portion that is deeded unto him.

And thus all things shall be made sure according to the laws of the land.

And let that which belongs to this people be appointed unto this people;

And the money which is left unto this people, let there be an agent appointed unto this people, to take the money to provide food and raiment, according to the wants of this people.

And let every man deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one, even as ~~I~~ I have commanded you.

And let that which belongeth to this people not be taken and given unto another church;

wherefore, if another church would receive money of this church, let them pay unto this church again according as they shall agree;

And this shall be done according to the bishop or the agent, which shall be appointed by the voice of the church.

And again, let the bishop appoint a storehouse unto this church, and let all things both in money and in meat, which is more than is needful for the want of this people, be kept in the hands of the bishop.

And let him also reserve unto himself for the wants of his family, as he shall be employed in doing this business.

And thus I grant unto this people a privilege of organizing themselves according to my laws. *

According to this last paragraph only the privilege of organizing according to the communal plan was given. In the revela-

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tion given on page five, dated March 1832, a command was given to ~~a~~ organize. It will be noted that in these revelations a specific promise is held out that the Lord will bless the people and preserve them. "And whoso is found faithful, a just and a wise steward, shall enter into the joys of the Lord, and shall inherit eternal life." *

But the Utopian scheme was far too ideal for the times and the place. In April, 1834, another revelation was given in which the claim is set forth that certain of the members were unfaithful and therefore it was wise to dissolve the United Order organized in 1832; and in its place "... ye shall ~~be~~ organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship, that every man ~~x~~ may give unto me an account of his stewardship which is appointed unto him." § Then certain of these men should organize again and contribute to a general treasury from which they might take such good as would be essential to the just discharge of their stewardship. But this closer organization was for the purchase of lands the construction of temples and the printing of such books as ~~w~~ were being brought forth by the church. °

But such communal schemes did not do for the church what was necessary to be done. The same troubles or dissension, lack of interest, covetousness and bad fellowship followed the Mormons in their efforts as have followed other peoples seeking to establish

*Doc. & Cov. 51:19
§ " " " 104:11
° " " " 104:57ff

similar plans. Failing thus to get the requisite aid under communal plans, the leaders of the church had to look for a better system; and one, especially, which would not demand such a complete consecration of property. In the frequent revelations given by Joseph Smith to the church were many references to tithing the people ~~that~~ that they might escape the day of burning.* Just what was meant by this tithe was not given out until some of the people reached Far West in Missouri where they sought to establish themselves. While here Joseph Smith gave the Law of Tithing to the church over which considerable dissension has since risen. All the surplus property was to be given to the General Bishop for the construction of certain buildings designed for the church. Then followed the paragraphs on tithing proper:

And this shall be the beginning of the tithing
of my people;

And after that those who have thus been tithed
shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually;
and this shall be a standing law unto them forever.⁹

It is to be noted that in this revelation there is nothing to indicate that this tithing was to go for the support of the poor. But from the context, and also other revelations given about that time, it is evident that the efforts of the leaders of the church were ~~endeavoring~~ endeavoring to get revenues for the completion of schemes to get possession of Jackson County, Missouri, where

*Compare Malachi, Chapter 3.
⁹Doc. & Cov. 119:3-4

a great community was to be established. However, these funds have come to be regarded as especially provided for the poor and the general expenses of the church. Since that year titheing has remained the primary, and practically only, financial support of the church.

In all the history of the church the General Bishop has acted as the chief distributor of its revenues to the poor. (See page 6) But such an arduous task could not be carried out by the Bishop and his two councillors when the membership increased to a very considerable amount. Accordingly, bishops were appointed over branches who directed the immediate relief of the poor, and administered spiritual aid, comfort to the sick and all the many acts which a man of God does among the people. Primarily, the office of the bishop is "in administering all temporal things", (Doc. & Gov. 107:68). He was to receive all monies, (58:35) administer to the poor and the needy (38:35), govern the affairs of the property of this church (38:36), and indeed be the temporal director of all those in his charge. Assisting him were twelve deacons, twenty-four teachers and forty-eight priests who could be called upon to look into the needs of the people by visiting them at all times. The bishop and his councillors were to receive support from the revenues. (42:72-3)

The chief features, then, of the Formative Period were the efforts to establish communal life that all the members of the church could be on an equal footing, a plan which had varying succe

cess; the provision of organizations to conduct the temporal affairs of the church; and the establishment of a tithes system. Especially to be emphasized is the strong tendency to establish communal life. As with all other doctrines advocated by Joseph Smith this one has clung to the Mormon people in one form or another with an undying tenacity. Today, many of the people believe they will yet become perfect enough to live in full the laws of the United Order. As for tithing, it remained to be better developed in the succeeding Constructive Period.

Brigham Young took hold of the Mormon Church when it was tottering from the blow of the ~~Orthage~~^{Utah} tragedy. What was needed was a strong, resolute leader, possessing clear foresight, practical ideas and commanding personality. The new leader possessed all these qualities.

There was something dramatic, as well as tragic, in the events which followed. That long crawl of the Indian-bested emigrant train up the bone-strewn ~~Overland~~^{Oregon} Trail to South Pass and thence through unexplored canyons to the Dead Sea of America, is now an Epic to the Mormon. Brigham Young was the latter-day Moses. Almost the supernatural happened: he touched the parched rock of the shores of the Salt Sea and waters gushed forth to yield unthoughtof bounties. The religious mind readily responded to such wonderful leadership; the fanatical mind, more so. Cast out by society, feet still weary from continual tramping, wounds and burns still smarting, victims of unrelenting fury: small wonder

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that that people lifted up its voice in that isolated wilderness and called their new leader blessed and the servant of God.

This situation must be appreciated in order to interpret the events which followed. The people had few provisions, little to do with, and an unknown soil, dry as the bones on the lonesome trails. All needed relief; all were poor and many were sick. Their leader saw the necessity of throwing their property into a common fund that all might survive. The natural thing happened again; the pioneers into that country followed their leader's advice and undertook everything they did on the communal plan. This time, however, the completeness of the United Order scheme was not followed out; Brigham Young was much too practical a man for any such ideal undertakings. It is true that in some few places efforts were made to follow the United Order system in its entirety, but in each instance it met with unmistakable defeat. Its modification, known as the co-operative plan, succeeded beyond expectation.

This co-operation consisted in ~~the~~ having all the people who expected to till the soil meet together, effect an organization and construct such canals, roads and other public utilities which were essential to agriculture in the new country. The land was not held in common but by individual holders; just such stock in such companies as were needful to develop the country was co-operated. After a reasonable success had been achieved in this industry, merchandising was tried with such success that in nearly every vil-

lage in the intermountain country where Mormons went, ~~there~~ was established a "Co-op", as these stores came to be known. with equal energy and ability for organization, Brigham Young began colonizing all the surrounding valleys from Salt Lake City. He had definite plans for laying out the sites for villages, for the many places for public buildings, and for the houses of worship. In each instance, certain men were "called" to go into these new lands and begin the colonies. To them were granted certain priveleges which made it worth their while to go. Again, in Salt Lake City, itself, was begun in 1852 the great temple which was forty years in building. Besides this structure, the Tabernacle was constructed with its wonderful dome. In all these enterprises the people co-operated,-those who could afford money, giving of their means, and those who could contribute only by labor, doing their little. In that way real wonders were accomplished by that people who were so far from any of the needed conveniences of their time. And to understand how this was done^{it} is but necessary to understand that the people were dominated by a great religious zeal and were led by a man who clearly saw the opportunities which lay before him.

This spirit of co-operation has not yet died in its entirety. Today, when the co-operative stores and construction~~x~~ companies, are practically defunct, the better, more philanthropic spirit of such efforts remain as a result of the years of training: now the sick, the destitute and the unfortunates are the object of this reeling. If a neighbor be sick, his field is tilled. Especially is

this true in the ^{country} ~~urban~~ communities, but the tendencies extend into the most populous cities. Hospitals are erected by popular subscriptions, the distressed are relieved by entertainments and dances designed for their benefit. In fact, although the communal spirit is dying the natural death which it has died in every other society yet today it is far from dead as it is evinced in the better, more sane relations of the Mormon communities.

Titheing has had its trials. While there is a larger sum raised today on titheing than at any other period in the history of the Church, it is no doubt true that, on the part of the younger element, there is more objection being raised to it than ever before. The interpretation of the words "one-tenth of all their interest annually" has given many a pretext for evading what is called the "honest tithe". Dissatisfaction breeds dissatisfaction, and again the economical motives are molding the history of the Church. But throughout all the discontent, the bishop continues to deal out to the poor of his ward all the comforts which the poor demands for a decent living; and ^{therefore} one will find in traveling through the Mormon communities very little distress and practically no poverty whatever.

