

ZION'S ADVOCATE

'And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost.' 1st Nephi 3:124

Volume Two

June 1, 1923

Number One

SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW

The articles of agreement, as they are commonly called, that were entered into by the Reorganized Church and the Church of Christ in 1913, were not a new thing. Indeed, they were rather an affirmation of the fourteen points that were agreed upon twenty-one years before, in January, 1897. Both times the Church of Christ made the overtures, nor were these the only occasions when a better understanding and friendlier relations with the Reorganization were sought, as their committee, reporting to the general conference of that church in April, 1913, was careful to state. The people of the Church of Christ have not been so content to draw a circle around themselves and isolate themselves from other believers in this latter day work, as many have supposed. Indeed, while other factions of the church labored to build up strong organizations, each claiming to be **the church**, the Church of Christ looked forward to a gathering together, out of all the factions, of the true and faithful. They have never assumed to be **the people**, and the only people, and herein lies a distinguishing difference between the position taken by the Church of Christ and that of other factions, in that the Church of Christ has held that the church was out of order, and that no organized portion of it could justly claim to be in order until set in order by the one who should demonstrate by his works that he was the one promised to be sent for that purpose.

Furthermore, it has been the belief of the Church of Christ that the great mission of the latter day work was to bring to pass the restoration of Israel, and that there would be a gathering, at the Temple Lot, of those who would qualify to be chosen for that work. This was the understanding of the little band of saints that came to Independence in 1867. They believed they were sent to obtain the temple ground and hold it for the people of the Lord. This belief in a gathering of the Lord's people to prepare for and receive the endowment that the gospel might go to Israel is the keynote of the position of the Church of Christ, and explains, to some extent, why they have not been more active in making new converts. They have believed that the house must be set in order first, and the power obtained that would make missionary effort more effective. It is not the object of this writing to defend the

Church of Christ, and say that they were always right or wise. In our opinion it would have been better if they had been as active along constructive lines as educational, but it is easy for us, standing at the point of vantage we do today, to see the mistakes of the past. We cannot fail to be impressed, however, with the stability of the little band, for they have refused to deviate from the old paths, and have stood steadfastly for the principle of an unchangeable God.

The church has believed that the gospel should produce a Zionie condition among the members, but it cannot claim, nor does it attempt to claim, that it has given a better demonstration than other factions. The view is held that "the few," spoken of in the parable of Zenos, who will constitute the church that Christ can approve, have yet to get together and give evidence of their qualification. Perhaps the feature of the position of the Church of Christ that will make the strongest appeal to many is the acknowledgment of imperfection, and the opportunity afforded, as well as the freedom, to build that which will be acceptable unto the Lord.

"How is it, having such a strong position, the Church of Christ has not made greater numerical growth?" is a question, we understand, that is often asked. It may well seem strange, when one thinks of the following that error gains, for a time, at least. We think the explanation must take into account natural reasons, and not expect the Lord will do everything, or that he can move faster than the minds of men are prepared to go. Had the church not concerned itself so much about scattered Israel, but moved out among the Gentiles in its work, it doubtless would have reaped its share of the harvest. But it must be understood that the Church of Christ directed its attention more particularly to fellow believers in the latter day work, trying to get them to see alike and come together. It found itself in a very unpopular position among the factions fifty years ago. It stood for democracy at a time when the people, notwithstanding what they had suffered, had not yet learned the folly of man worship. The love of leadership was still strong. The world has gone a long ways since then, and today, although there are forces working in an opposite direction, the idea of democracy is growing. Then again, fifty years ago, if you intimated

that everything in the "old church" was not as it should have been, if you dared to suggest that the prophet was human, and because of that fact his words should be carefully weighed in the light of the Scriptures, you were thought to be sacrilegious or downright apostate. Had you reason to believe that the human had entered into some of the revelations—why, you were not sound in the faith. You were regarded as an enemy when you only meant to warn against deception and point out error, believing people could not be expected to correct mistakes until they understood that mistakes had been made. The truth along some lines was not very welcome, no matter how well intended. Because of the prejudice with which the church had to contend, it has simply had to wait for the processes of time to work. Human nature has not changed, but men have learned more, and with the discoveries that have come to light, there has been a readjustment of views, and the position of the Church of Christ has been vindicated on some of the most controverted points.

We have been asked as to the differences between the Church of Christ and other factions of the latter day work. Originally, the most prominent points were polygamy, baptism for the dead, plurality of gods and the exaltation of men to the rank of gods, as well as "the doctrine of lineal right of office in the high priesthood, since the Christian era." Later, discoveries were made of changes in some of the revelations, so that we could not accept as authority the later rendering of some revelations. We realize that on some points the difference that once existed between us and some other factions has been fading away, and we are thankful for it. Today, however, we are sad to say, a new trouble is looming up. We refer to the tendency observed in some quarters to introduce innovations that to our understanding are quite as much departures from the faith, both in the letter and the spirit, as were some of the things against which the church was compelled to take a stand in the sixties. We do not believe progress should be so interpreted as to admit of taking any license with the law. When this latter day work came forth in 1830 it proclaimed to the world a God that is unchangeable, and a plan or system of carrying on His work that needed no tinkering by the doctors of letters and worldly wisdom. The Church of Christ stands upon that platform yet. We believe in liberty, in a free press and an open pulpit; in the utmost freedom for individual expression within reasonable bounds; but we are irrevocably for the "old paths" revealed in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and still think that the Spirit of God has more thrills and attractive power than the world and all its allurements. We are aware that many, in other factions, feel as we do. We

hope the time is not far distant when factional lines will not keep people apart who hold similar views, though they reach their conclusions by different routes.

WHEN THE CHURCH HAS A PRESIDENT

The church has a president when it is in need of a leader. The church needs a leader in the birth and formative period of its existence. The president-leader is the founder of the church.

When a thing does not exist it has to have a beginning. Of necessity someone has to make the start; someone has to point the way. There must be a message for men, a new truth, a standard, and someone must proclaim it. Hence we read of a Moses leading the Israelitish slaves out of bondage and declaring to them that God had chosen them to become custodians of divine truth, and be the channel through which the Savior of the world should come. . . . Nephi was selected to lead the colony out of Jerusalem to the choice land, as the brother of Jared, sixteen hundred years before, had led a company to the same choice land. Mosiah was commanded to call the righteous out from among the unrighteous. Alma was called to establish the church among the Nephites somewhere between 160 and 140 years before Christ.

We do not find that the office continued century after century as a fixed thing. It is not a feature in the divine plan after the church is established, but is only necessary to bring the church into existence and full running order. Hence when Christ came and set his church in order on two continents, twelve supervisory executives were chosen, affording the people a larger representation or expression, and Nephi, who was presiding over the western church at the time, was placed in the apostolic quorum of twelve. Neither are we now presented with a picture of a church with two heads, one a Presidency, the other a Twelve. There is not such duplication in the divine plan, no such bungling to engender jealousy and friction. When there is a President there is no Twelve, and when there is a Twelve there is no President. It does not take both offices to do the same work; one gets in the other's way, and when a people are sufficiently developed spiritually for the church of Jesus Christ to be established fully among them, "God hath set in the church first apostles"—that is the divine plan, and the leader has fulfilled his mission. The responsibility that rested solely upon him is now distributed among the various offices and quorums provided for in the law, and the church becomes able to take care of itself, with Jesus Christ at its head, supplying the life giving nourishment of his Spirit to every part and every individual.

THE BEST THEORY

We are sometimes told by the advocates of a theory that it is a good thing, but should not be put into practice until the people reach an ideal condition. What need will we have of the theory then? If we can climb up the ladder without it, we can surely stay up without it. What we want is theory of the sort that will help us get up the ladder; theory that is adapted to the needs of just common, ordinary mortals.

Alma and Mosiah admitted that a good king is a good thing, but because of the uncertainty of human nature, both men advised against autocracy in church or state. They recommended, instead, a system which we call, in our day, democracy, because it would insure the best results under the varying circumstances and conditions of human life.

The people desired Alma to be their king, but Alma had seen enough of autocracy; he knew it was not to be trusted. It was a system, once established, the people could not regulate. Too much was dependent upon the head. It needed an ideal man to be of benefit to the people. The ideal man for a leader or ruler is a rare product. He must be more than a good man. He must be a wise man. He must be temperamentally adapted to the position. His talents should be of the peculiar type such a position requires. These qualities may be distributed among a body of men, but to find them all in one man, Alma knew the risk was too great. He might or he might not have had confidence in himself for the position, but if he believed he could fill it acceptably, how could he know that his son would be the right kind of a man to succeed him? Alma knew that heredity is not to be depended upon.

So Alma refused to become a king. He admonished the people to remember the unhappy experience they had passed through under the reign of King Noah, and warned them to keep the reins of control in their own hands. The people were responsible to God for conditions in the church, and it was their duty to permit no one to be a teacher or a minister among them "except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments." (Mos. 11:15.) Alma did not seek power, and when the people desired to give it to him he would not take it, but taught them that they should not shirk the responsibility that was theirs, but should exercise it faithfully, in the fear of the Lord.

We want practical theories. Theories that do not have to wait until ideal conditions are created for them, but theories that will bring about proper conditions. Alma and Mosiah advised democracy because it leaves the way open for the exercise of the best that is in all men, and it puts the welfare and happiness of the people in their own hands. After all, this world was made for the people who come into

it, and not for a few dreamers to practice their ideas, hence the best theory is the one that gives the people the fullest opportunity to make conditions what they would desire. We may observe further that Alma evidently believed the interests of the Lord's work were safest in the hands of the people.

PRINCIPLE

What is principle? Some speak of it as if it were a variable, transitory, expediency sort of thing, to be controlled by circumstances; something that will fit in one place, but not another. That is not principle. Principle is basic, fundamental, eternal. If it ever had a beginning it antedated this world. Free agency, for instance, was given to us before we came here, but Lucifer treated principle as lightly as some of us do. He seemed to think that man's right of choice could be set aside to accommodate his theory about the salvation of the world. Most people would laugh if we suggested that the devil might have been honest, but we are going to suggest it just the same. The salvation of man was the issue under discussion on that occasion. It was a good subject. It was easy for Satan to reason that the end justified the means. But right there the Almighty declared the fixed, eternal nature of principle. It must not be trifled with; under any and all circumstances it must be respected.

Take another instance, equality, for example. We are not told anything about the pre-world history of this principle. We know that it was held in high esteem in the early annals of this mundane sphere, for the Lord thought so much of the people of Enoch because they loved one another as themselves that He gave them a home in his Heavenly abode. Every now and then one meets a church member who thinks human nature can never attain to equality in this mortal state, but he forgets that it has been done. Getting back to the point: Our knowledge of the history of equality begins in this world, though we do not say that is the beginning of the principle, and we know that equality, if we ever give it a demonstration, will not end when we leave this life. If we qualify we shall enjoy it in full measure in the life to come, even to the extent of being joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

One might go on, examining one fundamental principle after another, and the conclusion in every instance would have to be the same. The rights and privileges pertaining to men were determined before we came here. They will never be taken away. Any degree of progress that we make in exercising and developing those God-given prerogatives here will be as the budding period, and the full fruition will be enjoyed in the immortal world. Principle is like the God from whom it emanates; there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," about it.

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Issued in the Interests of

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

(Organized by Joseph Smith, April 6, 1830.)

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Subscription price, 50 cents per year; foreign countries, 75 cents.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Owing to the fact that space in the May issue of the Advocate would not permit us to print in full the report of the elders pertaining to the missionary, pastoral and financial work of the church, we now insert the same for the benefit of all those who were not in attendance at the conference.

It may be of interest to know that the several recommendatoinns contained therein were unanimously concurred in by all the elders, and that it was adopted by the general conference as a rule to govern the church by, until such times as it is more completely organized.

If there are parts of this report that you do not fully understand, don't hesitate to write us, and let us know, for we will be only too glad to assist you to become acquainted with these matters.

We, the undersigned elders of the Church of Christ, submit for your consideration the following recommendations as a solution for working out a program for the missionary, pastoral and financial work of the church, as per the following resolution passed by the General Conference:

"Resolved, That the elders attending Conference shall meet together in council, and arrange a program for the missionary, pastoral and financial work of the church, as outlined in the law of God; and that the same be presented to Conference before adjournment."

This resolution was carried unanimously.

In harmony with this resolution we hereby submit the following recommendations:

MISSIONARY WORK

We recommend that all the elders of the church are authorized to open up new places for the preaching of the gospel to the world and among the members of the church by preaching, correspondence, and all means in their power in harmony with the law; to seek to bring people into the church and build up the work of God in all the earth.

We further recommend that until further arrangements are made by the Conference that the elders may labor anywhere they may have opportunity in the United States or Canada;

And that the results of their labors be re-

ported to the one in charge of the missionary work of the church, but that the work in foreign lands should be prosecuted by joint concurrence of the elders.

We further recommend that conferences or councils of the elders may be called from time to time, so that cases requiring consideration may be laid before said conferences or councils, that advice may be obtained on the matters at issue.

We further recommend to Conference that we have printed tracts to be used as missionary propaganda on the following subjects:

1. First Principles.
2. Organic Law of the Church.
3. The City of Zion.
4. Building of the Temple.
5. The Law of God Governing the Temporal Affairs of the Church.
6. The Gospel to Israel.
7. The Millennial Reign of Christ.

Also, that these tracts shall be indorsed by the elders.

PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHURCH

We recommend that for the carrying out of a pastoral program for the church, "That the local or pastoral work of the church shall be carried on in a systematic and orderly way in harmony with the law of God."

And that all branches be organized with a presiding elder, local bishop or bishop's agent, and a priest, teacher and deacon, with an extension of these lesser offices as the needs may demand.

FINANCIAL PROGRAM

We recommend that it is the opinion of the council of elders that a local bishop may be ordained by the elders of the branch, and that the branch conferences have the power to appoint or designate their bishops.

That the financial law of the church requires the member to consecrate all his property that he may receive his stewardship in harmony with the law; that he receive his inheritance by consecration, or a certificate entitling him to the same when the church is in a position to give inheritances, "that they may be tithed against the day of vengeance and burning, or their names shall not be had upon the records of the church" (letter to W. W. Phelps, Evening and Morning Star, January, 1833, Vol. 1, No. 8), and that the complete law governing these matters is found in the standard books of the church.

Respectfully your fellow servants,
 ANDREW HIMES,
 C. L. WHEATON,
 A. O. FRISBEY,
 T. J. SHELDON.

Your collection of early church literature is not complete without the reprint of the Evening and the Morning Star as printed in Independence, Mo., in 1832-1833.

We have them in two bindings—check book cover, staple binding, at \$1.50 per copy, and full cloth sewed binding for \$2.50.