

# An Address to Latter Day Saints

*Noblesse Oblige*

## THE BISHOP AND ZION

In the Saint's Herald of September 2 1908, we have a lengthy report of a sermon by the Presiding Bishop of the Church which was delivered before the closing conference of April, 1908.

We are justified in taking the construction of law therein and the policy outlined as the ruling opinion and method upon which the church now acts.

As this article is written to take exception to strictures against proper agitation and other far-reaching teaching, coming from the Bishop's office, it is due the reader that good and sufficient reason should be shown as to why it should be considered.

If there was no other reason than the fact that the Bishop inveighs against the community ownership principle of organization, we submit and propose to prove, he is in serious conflict with prior authority. That he does so inveigh, read his published statements on pp. 851-852.

You find him saying, with the fact of his official position in full view: "But the business supervision and control cannot be carried on by the multitude, but a select few, and this few in such a community as that would be the governors or bosses of the affair and necessarily all others in their operations and work subservient." In this we object merely to the implication conveyed by the term "bosses." But he goes on to affirm: "Now if you want to build up an oligarchy, a trust, the biggest the world has ever seen, just take (the law of the land permitting it) and transfer everything to a trustee to be held in common and let the Bishopric, or the Twelve, or the Presidency, or the Seventy, or the High Priests or all of them together have charge and see how long the liberties of the people will be safe. I am as much opposed to the church trust as to any other kind of a trust."

Does that manifest or inculcate faith in God's guidance of His people or in the appointments of revelations?

What are the facts when people have submitted to the "bossing" referred to. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Josiah, Hezekiah, Lehi, Nephi, Mosiah, Benjamin, Alma, the Nephite disciples, the apostles of the Lord, Joseph Smith and others are instances of men who ruled the temporal, as well as spiritual interests of God's people, almost always faultlessly.

Where is the Bishop's faith that he could allow himself to insinuate so heartlessly against the coming theocracy.

The fact that he appeals to man's lowest motive—self-interest—shows that his remarks were not God-inspired. He gilds it with the sacred name of liberty—"the liberties of the people"—liberty for what? Why liberty to keep for self or to manage properties according to the will of self. The Head of the church expressly forbids his disciples to entertain any such spirit, saying, that our "Heavenly Father knoweth we have need of these things" and will surely protect us if we trust him—that is if we go about matters according to his design and commandments. God set up His church and its officers to teach faith in Him and in His people, not worldly wisdom, which is "the cunning of the Devil."

You notice that the Bishop's distrust sweepingly includes not only the present ministry but all men yet to be chosen to build up the New Jerusalem." He is allowed to speak in confession as to how he personally may or may not become a "boss," but he cannot attain the general principle of God's management of human affairs through His **chosen** men. From his own estimate of the management, it is hard to see how he can consistently remain in it.

Now let us examine sacred, inspired history as to the condition of "the liberties of the people" when they did practice common ownership of property.

Book of Nephi, Chap. xi:9-10: "And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written; and they taught and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another. And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them."

Is it not a correct inference that Jesus had commanded them to have "all things common among them?" Under these conditions Jesus showed Himself to them, stood in the midst of them and instructed them. No man dare imply that there was any "bossing" in evidence so long as this equality of ownership was observed.

But there came a change later. Let us read it from the prophet's own writing: Book of Nephi, Chap. 1, vers. 20 and 21:

“And now in this two hundred and first year, there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods no more common among them, and they began to be divided into classes and they began to build up churches unto themselves, to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.”

They began to apostacize, did they not? And was not one characteristic of the apostacy the fact that they abandoned the common ownership system? Is not that what the Bishop is also doing? Is it any the less apostacy to do that now, than then.

Take another instance from the inspired history. Acts ii: 44-47. “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Note here—“And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” Is it not a proper inference that their belief caused them to have all things common? Was not that their understanding of Christ’s requirements? And did not the Lord recognize their obedience in the matter? Then what kind of an officer is it that stands up before God’s people in these last days to discredit His plan?

Read Acts ii:31-35: “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that did believe were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed were his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was any among them that lacked for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”

Now these saints evidently believed that they were establishing “the equality that is described in the law” to quote from the bishop on p. 846, hence they come under the censure of his remark: “The fact that men and women have not understood what the Lord’s rule of equality is, has led them to wrong conclusions in the church in the past and leads them to wrong con-

clusions today." Would not the Pentecostal saints, after hearing a bishop denounce the all things common practice, think that he was the one that lacked understanding?

He even sees fit to liken long suffering saints who have dared to call for these old paths, today, to those among whom were "jarrings and contentions and envyings, and strifes and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances." Sec. 98, 1-3.

Now if the Lord sanctioned the all things common of the former-day saints and we lack that system, why should agitation in behalf of its institution be condemned and be given as the cause of the failure of the saints to establish equality in 1833. It would seem that ordinary common sense would show that it was opposition to the sacrifice by those that God had entrusted with the means, that caused the trouble. Those who had the means, keep it back as did Ananias and Saphira and there was not enough faith, outside of money, to do the work. God says so. Sec. 102:2: "Behold they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom. . . And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience."

Probably there were poor who were envious and lustful and too impatient with the holders of wealth, but how could it be otherwise when the means necessary to their work was kept back. God does not excuse murmuring, even among the poor, but He is just enough to put the rod of correction chiefly upon the rich, as we may see all through the scriptures. Does the Bishop do so? Not in this sermon at least.

The Bishop says: "Contention and clamor is not the way to attain to unity, to oneness, to equality; to anything that God will accept in the hereafter." Paul says "Contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints." Paul says: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."—I. Tim. vi:17. Hence he could preach equality without having to explain away the sacrifice by saying that he referred merely to equality of opportunity as the Bishop "darkens counsel with words."

Now let us take up our Book of Doctrine and Covenants, keeping in mind the understanding of Christ's commands manifested by those former-day saints who received approbation of the Lord Himself and we will find that it does not require even an Independence lawyer to interpret them. First read the quotations given in the Bishop's address. Sec. 51:1.

“Wherefore, let my servant, Edward Partridge, and those whom he has chosen, in whom I am well pleased, appoint unto this people their portion, every man 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.”

Would not the Nephites and the early Christians have understood that to agree in principle with what they were practicing?

Sec. 77:1.—“That you may be equal in the bands of heavenly things; yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things; for if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.”

Would not the former day saints referred to, have understood by this that they had been commanded and required of the Lord to hold to the principle of equal or common ownership, as they were doing, and that too, as a means of preparing for celestial conditions that they had not yet attained to. No one needs an ipse dixit of one in authority to answer these questions in the affirmative. These matters are dark and perplexing to those only who lack the singleness of heart of the Pentecostal church. There are none so blind as those who will not see.

On. p. 847 the Bishop proceeds to argue for the sole right to interpret the law pertaining to his work. Later as we have shown he would have us believe that to trust any or all the officers of the church with the management would endanger “the liberties of the people.” He argues that he should be trusted in a great matter, but later that he could not be trusted in a smaller. Which is superior, the law or the Bishop? Certainly the law. The law makes bishops. Bishops can have special instruction in the law, but it is evident they are not infallible. So long as a bishop or any other servant voices law, he must be respected. But when he opposes the law he must be silenced. “If I or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel. . . . Latter-day saints are pretty familiar with that quotation.

Now the Bishop quotes as we have shown, Sec. 51:1, and construes it to refer to stewardship, whereas the paragraph plainly refers to inheritances. There is no mention of stewardship in it. It says definitely, "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." The fact here stands out plainly that the first thing commanded to be done in Zion is to appoint inheritances, not stewardships and that upon a basis of equality.

We find this also to be the direction given in Sec. 102:7-8, "Let all my people who dwell in the regions round about be very faithful. . . . Until my servant Baurak Ale and Baneemy whom I have appointed, shall have time to gather up the strength of my house, and to have sent wise men to fulfill that which I have commanded concerning the purchasing of all the lands in Jackson county, that can be purchased, and in the adjoining counties round about; for it is my will that these lands should be purchased, and after they are purchased that my saints should possess them according to the laws of consecration, etc."

Any word given in the revelation that stewardships should be given out before all the land that can be purchased is portioned out according to the law of consecration? Not a word but in paragraph 10, we find what includes stewardships—"Let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law be executed and fulfilled after her redemption." Zion is not redeemed until after the land is possessed by the Saints, according to the law of consecration. That makes it holy ground, redeemed ground. Then having the ground right, we can proceed to carry out the laws concerning her business; hence then, and not before, we get to stewardships, as directed by God.

In this connection it will be well to remember that the very last revelation to the church. Sec. 127, in par. 7, admonishes the saints that the gathering must be done in accordance with this, Fishing River, revelation.

How could it be possible for a man to be entrusted with a stewardship upon unholy—that is upon unconsecrated ground—or locality. The command is to "stand in holy places."—Sec. 45:4. 98:5-9. How then can a man who is disobeying this command by staying in business upon unconsecrated ground be rightfully entrusted with a stewardship of funds which have been consecrated to the carrying out of God's plan?

The Lord having definitely directed us to wait until after Zion's redemption, by what right does the Bishop now proceed to give out stewardships connected with "the commandments concerning Zion?"

Let us further consider consecration and stewardships. Sec. 42:8-9-10—"If thou lovest me, thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. And behold thou wilt remember the poor

and consecrate of thy properties for their support, that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and deed that cannot be broken; and inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me, and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests, such as he shall or has appointed and set apart for that purpose. And it shall come to pass that after they are laid before the bishop of my church and after that he has received these testimonies concerning the consecration of the properties of my church that they cannot be taken from the church, agreeably to my commandments; every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, inasmuch as is sufficient for himself and family. And again, if there shall be properties in the hands of the church, or any individuals of it, more than is necessary for their support, after this first consecration, which is a residue, to be consecrated unto the bishop, it shall be kept to administer unto those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied, and receive according to his wants."

We see by this that all are firstly to give over to the bishop by a covenant and deed which can not be broken, everything that is "in their hands more than is necessary for their support."

As it is the Lord that is speaking, He is the one to say how much "is necessary for their support." We get His mind upon the matter from the prayer He taught His disciples. As regards necessities, He prays: "Give us this day our daily bread." The understanding then is that all are to consecrate practically all they have, merely reserving enough for present real necessities. Hence the reason why the former-day saints turned in their all as we have seen.

In order that the portion that is returned as stewardship, may be a legal stewardship, or one that God's law authorizes, it must comply with the authorizing law in regard to its being a complete and binding consecration.

Now how does the Bishop execute this law? He calls for an inventory of what one desires to consecrate and takes from him an agreement transferring the property mentioned therein to the church, but the understanding of saints with whom I have talked is that the bishop agrees not to have the transfer recorded, as required by the law of the land. This of course leaves the giver at liberty at any time to transfer the property to some one else, leaving the bishop's paper valueless. Hence the bishop is not obeying the law given to direct him, which says that the consecration shall be "with a covenant and deed which cannot be broken," Sec. 42:8. Of course if a deed is not put on record, ac-

ording to the law of the land it can very easily be broken. Notice on p. 851, the bishop says: "If we do not organize according to the laws of the land, we cannot organize at all in this country, and we ought not to want to." So say we all. Then why does he not put the transfers on record? Simply because that would let the business world know what had been done, and they would not be so willing to credit the transferers. But is it not due to the business world that it should know about the resources of those who do business with it? At least no false pretense of ownership shou'd be traded upon by a saint, and surely a bishop should not start it.

The only honest way to treat the church and the public is to record any transfers of properties made for so sacred a purpose as this. But as soon as the law is thus honestly and bindingly obeyed, it can easily be seen that the parties, thus fully consecrating, put themselves at a disadvantage in the world's competitive individual system, hence they will be driven to combine just as the law directs: "Ye must be one."

Accordingly we see that not only does the law uphold commonality of ownership, but even surrounding circumstances compel the saints to thus combine for self preservation. Thus they will be welded closer and closer and more than ever be brought to oneness of mind and heart. All this means of moulding is surely needed, for we are entering upon a plan that is to prepare us to be fully transformed to the celestial realm. Can we afford to trifle with these matters?

We have no objection to raise against the quotation by the Bishop of the article entitled "Duties and Responsibilities of the Saints," but we do not see that it would have us infer that the Bishop shall be allowed by any one to override long established law.

The matters here treated were discussed with the Presiding Bishop personally and alone, in 1904, and again in 1907, in the presence of a brother, as fully as opportunity allowed. Then, there being evidence that he adhered to the same policy, the matter was laid before the three leading quorums of the church, in writing, the Bishop being sent a copy of the same, early in 1908. Thus care has been taken to put the matter before the Bishop and the quorums as the law directs.

His deliberate policy, now published in the Herald, shows no correction.

It is conceived to be a duty to give the matter further publicity.

If the within argument does not appeal to lovers of Zion, it must be at fault. If it does so appeal they will know its credentials and perhaps see further duties.

BELIEVER.

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