

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

The practical life, providing or earning a livelihood, was expected to conform to an ideal order. The covenant relationship extended beyond religion and ecclesiastical duties. The saints were expected to adjust to an economic environment where buying and selling were perfectly legitimate enterprises done however, not merely for personal gain or profit but for the general building up of the Kingdom of God. The notion of free enterprise continued to prevail to such a degree that the hierarchy succeeded in drawing a sacred veil over the institution of private property that has remained intact.

Despite this seeming paradox, however, the utopian elements in Mormonism led to communal experimentation in some of the colonies. Joseph Smith had taught that a religion that was wholly other-worldly, that didn't produce the fruits of the abundant life here and now, as well as the promise of fulfillment in eternity, was something less than satisfying.

For more than thirty years beginning in the 1860's the United Order at Brigham City, under the direction of apostolic resident Lorenzo Snow, was a dominant part of the culture. Designed to form the basis of a millennial society, it reached into every aspect of the lives of the people, influencing not only the economy but the political and social structure of the community as well. At the height of its success it proved to be one of history's fine:: examples of the results of combined industry and religious devotion.

From a small beginning as a mercantile co-operative the order gradually expanded to include manufacture of every description together with the co-operative production, sale, and purchase of all kinds of goods. Horticultural and agricultural projects led the list on enterprises which included woolen mills, tanneries, pottery, broom, and hat factories.

Participants and employees received the same dividends and shares in products and merchandise. Whenever a medium of exchange was necessary beyond goods-in-kind a form of script was issued similar to greenbacks.

John Taylor, who later succeeded Brigham Young as president of the Church, attempted to persuade other communities to follow the example of the Brigham City experiment by reporting on the success of the "Order" in 1874:

••• They have got their cooperative store, it is true but that is only a small part of it. Sometime ago I asked them--"You have a factory here, haven't you?" "Yes." "Well, do you sell your wool, send it to the states to mix up with shoddy and get an inferior article, or do you make it up yourselves?" "We make it up ourselves." "Then you don't sell your wool, and keep your factory standing idle?" "No, we don't our factory has never stood idle a day for want of wool since it was organized." Said I--"That looks right. What do you do with your hides? Do you send them off?" "No", we have a very good tannery and we tan them, and make them into leather for shoes, and for harness and for other purposes." "Oh, indeed" "Yes, that is the way it is." "Well, then, what next?" "Why, when we get our shops made, we have a saddler's organization, and they make all the saddlery and harness we want." "And what do you do with your cows? Do you let them

run on the plains, and live or die, just as it happens, without making any cheese or butter?" "No, we have a cooperative dairy, and we have our cows in that, and we receive so much from them all the time regularly." "Well," said I, "that looks right. And are you all interested in this?" "Well, about two-thirds or three-fourths of us are all engaged in these matters." "How about your store, does it run away with the best part of it?" "No," "Does the factory get the cream of it?" "No." "Does some keen financial man get his fingers in and grab it?" "No, we are all mutually interested in everything, the profits as well as the losses." I have learned, since I was there, that they have made it a great success.

Now, then, if you can organize one little thing in that way, everything can be done in the same way. I was talking with President Lorenzo Snow, and he told me that they pay their men every Saturday night. They have a money of their own and they pay their hands with it, and that is good for everything they require. And they make their arrangements unitedly, and they operate together for the general good. Said I. "How do they feel about this United Order?" "Oh," I was told, "They are ready for anything that God may send along. That is the feeling among the saints, I believe, generally.?"

Membership in the order was encouraged at all levels and at times active involvement was an indication of religious fidelity. The High Priests' Quorum, which was the governing ecclesiastical body of the settlement, looked with considerable distrust upon its own members who were not also committed to the order.

A special baptism into the order was required in addition to the regular baptism which admitted one to membership in the Church, and the rules governing the cooperative were set up in strict harmony with the doctrines and theological principles of Mormonism, A copy of "The Rules That Should Be Observed By Members of The United Order," was found in the old family Bible:

Rule 1. We will not take the name of Deity in vain, nor speak lightly of His character or of sacred things.

Rule 2. We will pray with our families morning and evening, and also attend to secret prayer.

Rule 3. We will observe and keep the Word of Wisdom according to the Spirit and meaning thereof.

Rule 4. We will treat our families with due kindness and affection, and set before them an example worthy of imitation, in our families and intercourse with all persons, we will refrain from being contemptuous or quarrelsome, and we will cease to speak evil of each other, and will cultivate a spirit of charity towards all. We consider it our duty to keep from acting selfishly or from covetous motives, and will seek the interest of each other and the salvation of all mankind.

Rule 5. We will observe personal cleanliness, and preserve ourselves in all chastity by refraining from adultery, whoredom and lust. We will also discountenance and refrain from all vulgar and obscene language or conduct.

Rule 6. We will observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, in accordance

with the revelations.

Rule 7. That which is not committed to our care we will not appropriate to our own use.

Rule 8. That which we borrow we will return according to promise, and that which we find we will not appropriate to our own use but seek to return to its proper owner"

Rule 9. We will, as soon as possible, cancel all individual indebtedness contracted prior to our uniting with the Order and when once fully identified with the Order, will contract no debts contrary to 'the wishes of the Board of Directors.

Rule 10. We will patronize our brethren who are in the Order.

Rule 11. In our apparel and deportment we will not pattern after nor encourage foolish and extravagant fashions, and cease to import or buy from abroad any article which can be reasonably dispensed with, or which can be produced by combination of home labor. We will foster and encourage the producing and manufacturing of all articles needful for our consumption as fast as our circumstances will permit.

Rule 12. We will be simple in our dress and manner of living, using proper economy and prudence in the management of all entrusted to our care.

Rule 13. We will combine our labor for mutual benefit, sustain with our faith, prayers and works, those whom we have elected to take the management of the different departments of the Order, and be subject to them in their official capacity, refraining from a spirit of faultfinding.

Rule 14. We will honestly and diligently labor, and devote ourselves and all we have to' the Order and the building up of the Kingdom of God

Clem was born into the Order and lived out the years of his youth and early manhood while it was still the chief agency through which the social, religious, and economic interests of the whole community were achieved and unified. As a child he first identified with the Order in his parents home. His father ran a peddler wagon for the co-op store through the settlement north and south of Brigham City. He carried general merchandise for sale, but took in payment whatever was offered including potatoes, molasses, butter, eggs, or poultry. When Clem was about nine years old, his father became manager of the co-op store and subsequently the family moved to Brigham City where the Order was the life force of the settlement. Throughout his childhood and early youth the affairs and interests of the United Order were the most talked about subjects in his grandfather Welch's home. Welch was Bishop of the Fourth Ward and a prominent member and director of the United Order Council.

Clem was often present when word was brought home about decisions and discussions at regular High Priests' Quorum meeting or special sessions of the council.

The order of the priesthood provided that the “Keys of the Kingdom” belong to the Presidency of the High Priesthood, as with the general church presidency, so also three presiding High Priests constituted the presidency of the settlement of the local diocese or stake level. The quorum of High Priests had been originally “instituted for the purpose of qualifying those who shall be appointed standing presidents or servants over different stakes scattered abroad.”

For more than twenty years Lorenzo Snow had the distinction of being the Apostle in residence, President of the High Priests’ quorum, President of the Stake, and President of the United Order Council. His son succeeded him as President of the Stake in 1877 but until the turn of the century he continued to be the leading influence in the community.

In addition to providing the leadership of the church and community, other duties of the High Priests’ Quorum included; sheltering and counseling the youth and the women of the Church, being their brother’s keepers, shouldering responsibility for the general community welfare, and the supervising and encouraging of the United Order. Unmistakeably the quorum reached into the personal and private lives of its members in a very real and detailed way. Those who declined to be baptized into the Order as well as persons not attending meeting regularly were considered not in good standing. Committees were appointed to investigate and deal with backsliding members and to recommend suspension or disfellowship from the quorum or excommunication from the Church.

The most important sin was “consorting with the enemy” meaning outsiders or apostates. And Corinne, the gentile railroad town six miles to the west, was “off limits” for members of the United Order.

As with most great human enterprises, whether divinely inspired or not, it is the human factor which eventually determines the success or failure. As long as the people lived by the rules and principles of the Order, without personal selfishness, denouncing covetousness, pride, deception and greed, they prospered. The system gradually dwindled and finally failed as its supporters succumbed to the human weakness of envy, impatience, desire for outward personal display, and worldliness in general.