



Mormon Missionaries working in Winnipeg and Brandon a few years ago

Back row: Joseph Ellison, C. F. Jenson, Seth Thomas, Jasper Head, Social Rolph. Front row: Charles Broadbent, Alex. Lushman, W. S. Barton, Sterling Williams, Jas. F. Stuart, A. M. Merkley.



Children who learn Mormon doctrines at school. Standard III. in the public school at Cardston, Alberta

MORMON RITES AND DOCTRINES

Missionary Work, Baptism for the Dead and Strict System of Tithing

By NAN MOULTON

TO say Mormonism is almost inevitably to think polygamy. But listen now to further quaintnesses of this peculiar people.

To walk warm and close to a revelation is to hold a living faith. "The sign" is so eagerly craved by humans. "How could I doubt?" Brigham Young the third asked, "I sat in a meeting and heard the testimony of one to whom the angel came."

There is that curious doctrine of baptism for the dead, unfolded to me by Mr. S. M. Woolf, on an afternoon when a riot of rain revived in Cardston memories of the old-time floods. Mr. Woolf is keen-looking and clever, sort of legal type, with much personal charm and of an apparent sincerity. I had seen a magazine note to the effect that Mr. S. Low, while filling a mission in Scotland, had obtained the genealogy of forty-five thousand people who had passed away, and I wanted to know why. It transpired that from the time of Christ and His apostles until the finding of the tablets by Joseph Smith, the world was in spiritual darkness. Mormonism is the one immutable eternal faith, lost in an early age and restored in these latter days. All the "spirits in prison" can be redeemed by proxy. And devout saints are solemnly immersed day by day for a grandfather departed not in faith,

and for all sorts of remote progenitors wandering in outer darkness, a dip for each ancestor. Some devote their whole time to being baptized, undergoing several immersions a day, a busy life that one would expect to be interrupted by rheumatism.

"It seems so mad," I mused.

"To me it is the most beautiful doctrine of our faith," insisted Mr. Woolf.

"Have you never doubted," I wondered, looking at his keen, eager face and noting his easy, confident manner.

"Yes," he admitted, "yes, I have. But now I believe so much that at the present moment I am supporting two brothers on missions."

By this time "missions" had grown into one's scheme of things. From the first the Church of Latter-Day Saints seems to have depended for its very life and heart-throbs upon ceaseless campaigns of propagandism. Nearly every male Mormon is called upon to serve two years or more as a missionary. At the present time twenty-two hundred youthful elders are leaving the countries of the earth with tracts and argument and conversation.

"What is the attitude here in Canada?" I asked Bishop Hamner, "of your church and our churches? Are you doing any missionary work among us? And are we attempting to convert you?"

"We have missionaries at work all the time," he said, "but your churches have no missionaries among us."

"And how successful are you among Canadians?"

"A few come in," he said, "one now and then," but he seemed content.

Every Mormon I met referred proudly to his missionary work, Principal Bramwell, at the Academy, the good-looking boy in the hotel, Mr. Woolford, of the Milling Co., the Scotch Bishop at Raymond, men in banks and business and farms. Johnny Woolf, M.P.P., did his term of missions in Winnipeg several years ago.

Missions are the greatest tonic of the church for the weak and wobbling in the faith. Even the weak in faith must obey when commanded to a mission. The effort to convert others re-acts on themselves, and the successful getter of converts rises rapidly in church officialdom. It is difficult to quite determine the appeal of the Mormon evangelist which is largely to the ignorant and unenlightened. The discourses are long, rambling, monotonous and often ungrammatical. The missionary is often rough and uncouth. But he is powerful in his absolute faith, and convincing to others of his own class, the struggling of foreign lands. The Mormon faith swallows the distinctive features of a dozen denominations, wherefore the doctrinal appeal is broad. And here is the material appeal, the loaves and fishes, the penniless immigrant helped, the unfit attached to temporal activities, the hearty, kindly brotherhood promised. So, besides the Saints of pure American ancestry, we find English and Scotch and Scandinavian in the Alberta towns, Jansens and Rasmussens, and in Raymond Bishop Anderson, a Scot from Aberdeen. There he sat in the little hotel parlor in the evening light, blithe and freckly and sandy, his eyes all crinkly with Doric fun, and it seemed he just couldn't be true.

"What on earth," I gasped, "is a Scotchman from Aberdeen doing as a Bishop in a Mormon church?"

"He was doing very well, thank you, and he told me of his conversion in his boyish years back in Aberdeen and of the bitterness of his wife's people against her joining the faith."

"I was a Mormon elder," he said, "who helped a girl in Utah. That girl is now my wife. Mayhap the agitators in England would count that among the iniquities they are at present imputing to our people."

These missions must be a great economic drain, for the missionary earns no money while in the field and is supported by some relative. Often a wife must support herself and family at home and keep a husband in the field at the same time. Here the Church helps not at all, contributing only the homeward fare of returning missionaries, which brings us to the funds of the Church and Tithes.

Every Mormon man, at the end of every year, gives one-tenth of his income or his products towards the maintenance of the Church's activities. In the early days, when there were few markets, or none, these tithes were paid in kind. So the tithing house was built in every community in which were stored the potatoes and wheat and oats that were devoted to the service of the Church. The tithes are oftener paid in money now-a-days, but the tithing barns remain. *No accounting of the expenditure of this enormous fund has ever been made to the contributors.* They are told that the money is used to pay the return fare of missionaries, to build and support the Church schools, and to build and maintain temples. Think of the power of this tithing fund in the hands of a closely organized secret leadership! Southern Alberta contributes one-tenth of the products of nearly ten thousand of her citizens to this secret power in another country.

To illustrate the purely perfunctory character of much of the Mormon's observances, an amused Gentile tells of seeing one day near the tithing house a Mormon farmer with a load of hay. The tithing clerk was away and the farmer in a hurry.

"Mr. Gentile," said the farmer, "do you know where Brother H— is? I have a load of hay here for the Lord, but don't know what in hell to do with it."

The orthodox Mormon is abstemious, wine, tobacco and even tea and coffee being prohibited. Fast Sunday is observed the first Sunday of the month, the money going to the relief fund for the sick and poor. The Mormon believes in a millenium when for one thousand years mortals and immortals will be together here on earth. Missionary work in the spirit world goes on all the time. There are latter-day prophets and direct revelation and healing by laying on of hands. Three separate persons compose the Trinity, these persons being united by a common purpose. To the non-Mormon, quaintness is passed and blasphemy near or at hand when