

As an alleged further following of the New Testament, learning has never been held in high esteem as a needed part of preparation for heralding the Mormon gospel. The great business was to "give testimony" to the truth. This in the form of bold, positive assertions was all-sufficient, though proof texts are handled in a fashion fearful and wonderful. The elders are not chosen because of any intellectual gifts. Most are unlettered, and many are also youthful. But let it not therefore be imagined that they are suffered to depart unprovided with weapons, both defensive and offensive, or untrained in their use. Every boy is a potential missionary, and is regarded as such in the Sunday-school and in the various quorums of the priesthood through which he passes. Presently he has by heart the tenets of the church, the choice texts and arguments for and against, and he is called to use them frequently in public in the presence of his friends. His piece is not lengthy, he learns it perfectly and can produce it with vigor on short notice.

Strangest feature of all, and certainly a wide departure from even the letter of the gospel, piety is not deemed essential, the moral character of the messenger is not much taken into account. So there is no sort of scruple about appointing those whose graces are far below the average. They are called and sent to give them a chance to see the world and to test their courage and skill facing the foe, to deliver them from evil associations and habits, and even to punish them for transgression against church rule. One saint, a saloon keeper, was "sustained" to go forth and tell of Joseph and the Book, but before the police were advised of the fact he had been arrested for selling liquor on Sunday.

It was a favorite practice with Brigham Young to take revenge upon any who were proud or stubborn, or in any way troublesome, to break their fortunes and place them where they could do no harm, by sending them to distant and desolate regions. That is, to remain until penitent, at least until called home; for the traveling elders never go forth for life, but only for a single campaign of a few months or years. At first, when the distance to be gone over was not great, there was a continual going and coming. Next the fashion was to make a summer campaign and spend the winter months studying in the Kirtland "School of the Prophets." Later still, when Salt Lake had become Zion's seat, and a broad stretch of mountain and desert must be crossed, and foreign lands were to be possessed, the rule was fixed of choosing at the great April Conference, and for a period varying according to circumstances from one to three years.

And it is worth noting that if this system of limited terms of service, coupled with constant change of men, results in defective work, through the crudeness and inexperience of the toilers, the great advantage ensues as an offset that the tug of spreading the kingdom is