

D&C Lesson 36B

MORMON COLONIZATION AND EXPANSION

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, October 2001

1. **Mormon colonization was based on “the loyalty of the people to their leaders and their unselfish and devoted personal sacrifice”**

A. *Calls made at general conferences.* “Many communities in Utah and southern Idaho and later in parts of Arizona, Wyoming, Nevada, and California were founded by individuals and families called at general conferences. President Brigham Young directed the establishment of the communities, where thousands of new settlers could live and farm. During his lifetime, all of the Salt Lake Valley and many surrounding areas were colonized. ***By 1877, when Brigham Young died, more than 350 colonies had been established, and by 1900 there were almost 500.*** Early Church authority Brigham Henry Roberts noted that the success of Mormon colonization stemmed from ‘the loyalty of the people to their leaders and [their] unselfish and devoted personal sacrifice’ in carrying out their calls from President Young. The colonists sacrificed material comforts, the associations of friends, and sometimes their lives to follow a prophet of the Lord.”

[*Our Heritage*, pp. 86, 88]

B. *The typical attitude of those who moved:* “In 1862 *Charles Lowell Walker* received a call to settle in southern Utah. He attended a meeting for those who had been called and recorded: ‘Here I learned a principle that I shall not forget in awhile. It showed to me that obedience was a great principle in heaven and on earth. Well, here I have worked for the last seven years through heat and cold, hunger and adverse circumstances, and at last have got me a home, a lot with fruit trees just beginning to bear and look pretty. Well, I must leave it and go and do the will of my Father in Heaven, who overrules all for the good of them that love and fear him. I pray God to give me strength to accomplish that which is required of me in an acceptable manner before him.’”

[*Ibid.*, p. 88]

C. *Colonizers knew they were being called on missions and knew that they would remain in their assigned locales until they were released:* Charles C. Rich, who was called to lead a settlement in Bear Lake Valley, 150 miles north of Salt Lake City, experienced a bitterly cold first winter with deep snows. Some of the other men wanted to move, but he told them: “There have been many hardships. That I admit . . . and these we have shared together. But if you want to go somewhere else, that is your right, and I do not want to deprive you of it. . . . But I must stay here, even if I stay alone. President Young called me here, and here I will remain till he releases me and gives me leave to go.” [*Ibid.*, p. 89]

D. *Reports:*

1. The Iron Mission to settle Parowan, Utah, December 1850.
2. The “Hole in the Rock” company, sent to settle across the Colorado River into the San Juan area in southeastern Utah in 1879.
3. The settling of the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado in 1884.

2. **The Death of President Brigham Young** [2nd President of the Church: 1844 - 1877]

A. *His leadership:* “As a leader, President Brigham Young was practical and energetic. He

traveled to the settlements of the Church to instruct and encourage the Saints. By direction and example, he taught members to fulfill their callings in the Church.” [Ibid., pp. 90-91]

B. His summary of his accomplishments [given to the editor of a New York newspaper several years before his death]: “The result of my labors for the past 26 years, briefly summed up, are: The peopling of this Territory by the Latter-day Saints of about 100,000 souls; the founding of over 200 cities, towns and villages inhabited by our people, . . . and the establishment of schools, factories, mills and other institutions calculated to improve and benefit our communities . . . My whole life is devoted to the Almighty’s service.” [Ibid., p. 91]

C. His death: In August, 1877, President Young fell very ill, and in spite of physicians’ care, died within a week. He was 76 years old and had led the Church for 33 years. Today we remember him as:

1. the dynamic prophet who led modern-day Israel to their promised land.
2. His sermons touched on all aspects of daily life, making clear that religion is part of everyday experience.
3. His understanding of the frontier and his sensible guidance inspired his people to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks as with the blessings of heaven they created a kingdom in the desert.” [Ibid., p. 91]

3. The Administration of President John Taylor [3rd President of the Church, 1877 - 1887]

4. Bringing the gospel to Mexico: “President Taylor was committed to doing all he could to see that the gospel was proclaimed to the ends of the earth. In the October 1879 general conference, he called Moses Thatcher, the Church’s newest Apostle, to begin proselyting in Mexico City, Mexico. Elder Thatcher and two other missionaries organized the first branch of the Church in Mexico City on 13 November 1879, with Dr. Plotino C. Rhodacanaty as the branch president. Dr. Rhodacanaty had been converted after reading a Spanish Book of Mormon pamphlet and writing to President Taylor for additional information about the Church.

“With a nucleus of twelve members and three missionaries, the restored gospel began to spread slowly among the Mexican people. On 6 April 1881, Elder Thatcher, Feramorz Young, and a Brother Paez hiked to a height of 15,500 feet on Mount Popocatepetl and held a brief dedication service. Kneeling before the Lord, Elder Thatcher dedicated the land of Mexico and its people that they might hear the voice of the Lord, their true shepherd.

“Elder Thatcher returned to Salt Lake City and recommended that additional missionaries be called to serve in Mexico. Soon several young men, including Anthony W. Ivins, a future member of the First Presidency, were laboring in Mexico City. As part of the Church’s effort in the Mexican Mission, a Spanish language edition of the Book of Mormon was published in 1886. The story of Meliton Trejo, who helped to translate the Book of Mormon and other Church literature into Spanish, demonstrates how the Lord directs his work.

“Meliton Trejo was born in Spain and grew up without settling on any religion. He was serving in the military in the Philippines when he heard a remark about the Mormons in the Rocky Mountains and felt a strong desire to visit them. Later he became very ill and was told in a dream that he must visit Utah. When he recovered, he journeyed to Salt Lake City. He met Brigham Young and investigated the gospel. He became convinced that he had found the truth and became a member of the Church. He served a mission in Mexico and was then prepared, spiritually and intellectually, to play a major role in

seeing that Spanish-speaking people could read the Book of Mormon in their own language.” [*Ibid.*, pp. 93-94]

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