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Moroni, A Sketch of the Nephite Republic, I

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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Abstract: Roberts offers his thoughts on the origin and character of government, both in general and amongst the Children of Israel in the Old Testament.

doing wrong as not, and show him how to do right; if he is offended at me for so doing, it proves that he is destitute of knowledge. If the angel of darkness reproves you for your evil deeds, thank him for it, but tell him to keep at a respectable distance and that you will try not to need any more of his kind offices.

Through their oneness, the Latter-day Saints have become a terror to the enemies of truth.

A great many confess their sins, but a much smaller number forsake them.

The power of the devil is great upon the earth, but it is fast playing out, and the inhabitants of the earth must have true knowledge.

Elevation, exaltation and glory are the objects of the Father in peopling this earth with His progeny.

I differ from the orthodox divines of the day. They say that man is naturally prone to evil. In some respects this is true whereby the force of example and wrong tradition has become ingrained; but if man had always been permitted to follow the instincts of his nature, had he always followed the great and holy principles of his organism, they would have

led him into the path of life everlasting, which the whole human family are constantly trying to find.

THE POWER OF LABOR.—Gold is not power. A man may possess all the gold, silver and precious stones in the world, which are called wealth and yet starve to death. Wealth does not give true greatness. It will purchase medical aid in case of sickness; it will purchase food, clothing and shelter; but true wealth consists in the skill to produce those conveniences and comforts from the elements. All the power and dignity that wealth can bestow is a mere shadow, the substance is found in the bone and sinew of the toiling millions. Well directed labor is the true power that supplies our wants. It gives regal grandeur to potentates, education and support to religious and political ministers, and supplies the wants of the thousands of millions of earth's sons and daughters.

There are conditions and panics in society that all the power of earthly wealth cannot avert.

Ignorance is even more unjust than malice.—*Balzac.*

MORONI.

A SKETCH OF THE NEPHITE REPUBLIC.

I.

"CONSTITUTIONS are not made," says Herbert Spencer, "they grow;" and Herbert Spencer is right. Governments, with all their complex relations, with their nice adjustments of legislative, executive and judicial departments, with their powers balanced and checked, were not produced instanter, by a single effort of mind. Their development to the degree of perfection attained to-day resembles the slow growth and development of ordinary mortals, from infancy to perfected manhood or womanhood, rather than the fabled origin of the goddess Minerva, who is said to have sprung from the head of Jupiter, not a child, but a full-grown woman, completely armed.

With Blackstone, who is an authority on

the subject, I cannot believe, as some have affirmed, that men, from the impulse of reason, and through a sense of their wants and weaknesses, met together in a large plain, formed an original compact and chose the tallest man to be king. Going no further back than the middle ages, we know that a constitution (which is synonymous with government) of that time was not like a constitution of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, created by a single act, and fully set forth in a single document.

We know from Holy Writ, as we must also know from reason, that government originated in the family, and was patriarchal in form for ages, rather than monarchical or democratic. The children of the first man, brought into being

through his agency, nourished through long periods of helplessness by his tender care, provided for by his industry, protected by his strength and courage, it was but natural for them to trust to the wisdom of his counsel, and yield a ready obedience to his authority. The second generation followed in the example of the first, and so the third and the fourth.

The occupation of men in those primitive ages being principally pastoral, their relations with each other were very simple; and this natural, patriarchal government was sufficient for their necessities. But as the race multiplied, portions of it, from necessity, had to separate from the main body and live in parts of the land more or less remote from their fellows. Then, doubtless, the number of those who tilled the soil increased, and permanent communities began to be established.

All climates and soils did not produce the same grains, fruits and vegetables; nor did all communities manufacture the same articles, and yet these various products were necessary to supply the wants of men; and as they could only be secured to all by means of an exchange of commodities, commerce sprang into existence. These changed conditions in the industrial and social relations of the race, called for changes in government. The relations of separate families, forming the community, and of communities with distinct interests and manners, had now to be regulated, a task which the patriarchal system, alone, was not competent to perform; hence, by force of circumstances, it was variously modified.

Avarice and ambition prompted men to undertake wars of conquest; and since it is the disposition of most men, when possessed of authority, to exercise unrighteous dominion over their fellows, these conquerors soon learned the art of oppression. They felt power and forgot right. Thus despotisms were formed, and tyrants reigned as kings.

I love tyrants, in a qualified sense, because they make patriots. Oppression taught men to inquire into the rightfulness of the authority of those who had assumed to govern them. This inquiry

led to modifications, often to revolutions in government; but nearly always to a better adjustment of the liberties of the people and the powers of government.

It was not until considerable progress was made from the simple pastoral life to the more complex relations of society, growing out of communities engaging in the pursuits of agriculture, manufacture and commerce that government was reduced to anything like system. Macaulay, indeed, says that it is only in a refined and speculative age that a government is constructed on system; and I believe the facts of history sustain his statement. But the attention of patriots once directed to the subject of government, they worked upon it assiduously; and successive generations, profiting more or less by the experience of the one preceding it, so modified existing states or organized new ones as to base them upon those principles which to them seemed most likely to serve the end of government, viz.: The security of society.

Races of people, however, are different in temperament, and in their customs and habits, in education, in sentiment, in experience and in tradition. And since all these things affect the character of government, it is easy to understand how such a variety thereof exists. These various forms of government, however, political writers of antiquity reduced to three: Democracy, aristocracy, monarchy. In the first, the power is lodged in an aggregate assembly composed of all the free members of the community; in the second, in a select number of the community supposed to be the most experienced and wealthiest citizens; in the third, it is entrusted in the hands of a single person. All other kinds of governments the above mentioned writers held to be either corruptions or modifications of one of these three forms. The idea of a mixed government, into which elements of each of these primary forms should enter—such as we know the government of Great Britain to be—was derided as a visionary whim; and even a man of the excellent understanding of Tacitus said that if such a government was effected it could never be lasting or

secure, a conjecture which the experience of a number of modern governments proves to be ill founded.

Of the virtues and faults of these three forms of government it is generally conceded that in a democracy, where the people are the law-making power, justice and other public virtues are most likely to be attained; but they break down or at best are weak in execution; and usually republican governments have ended in anarchy or despotism. An aristocracy is most likely to exhibit wisdom in its councils and laws; but consideration for the interests of the ruling class is very likely to outweigh the public interests, and it is as weak in execution as a democracy. A monarchy (I refer to absolute monarchy), the only kind known to the ancients, the legislative and executive powers being central in one person, is the most powerful of governments, for in it all the sinews of power are united in the hands of the king, a circumstance which almost ensures a prompt and powerful administration of the laws. It is for this reason that monarchy, notwithstanding its tendency to tyranny, has been held in such high esteem by the generations of men in the past. So anxious have men been to feel secure in the peaceful possession of their property, and free from the violence of mobs, that they have endured all the evils of monarchy, its inconsistencies and oppressions, rather than risk a precarious peace in order to enjoy the tumultuous but larger liberty of a democracy.

But however highly monarchy may have been esteemed by men, it has not been held in such high favor by God. When the Lord chose Israel to be His people, He gave them a peculiar form of government, which could not well be regarded as a democracy, an autocracy, or a monarchy. The Lord chose wise men to be their leaders, and the people accepted them. So that they derived their authority from a choice both of God and the people. It might be said with more precision, they were nominated by the Lord and elected by the people. Let no one doubt that popular acceptance is election. The elective principle is not only carried out by direct means, it may be carried on by in-

direct means. "It is just as much a fact," says Guizot, in his *History of Civilization*, "under the form of popular acceptance as of choice," and it was in this manner that the Israelites elected their leaders, their judges.

Of these prophet-judges, Moses was the first; and through him the Lord revealed unto Israel a code of laws, the wisdom and justice of which have challenged the admiration of the good and wise of all subsequent generations; and which to-day form the bases of the jurisprudence of most if not all Christian nations.

In addition to the tribal divisions in Israel, there were other sub-divisions made at the suggestion of the priest Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. Previous to this, Moses was the only judge in the nation, and the people came to him with all their difficulties; which Jethro observing, warned Moses that to continue such a course would wear out both the people and himself; and advised him, if the Lord would sanction it, to "provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge; so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."*

This very excellent advice Moses accepted, as did also the people, and the divisions were made. Josephus in relating this matter says that each division nominated the leader that was to preside over it, † which, if he be not mistaken, reveals the fact that very much of the democratic principle entered into the Hebrew constitution under the Judges.

This kind of government continued in Israel from Moses to Samuel, a period of about four hundred years. But as the sons of Samuel, who succeeded him as judges, when he was in his old age, walked not in the footsteps of their father, the people desired to change the form of

* Exodus xviii.

† Antiquities of the Jews, Book 3, chap. iv.

government and have a king to rule over them as other nations had. This proposition grieved Samuel very much and at first he would not consent to grant their demand. But the Lord said to him: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."*

The prophet, however, was commanded to solemnly protest against the change, and to warn them of all the evil resulting from a monarchical government—the pride and oppression of kings, and the loss of liberty on the part of the people. This he did, but all in vain. "Nay," said they, "but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." Their wish was granted, and Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was chosen king.

Just previous to Samuel's death, he called the people of Israel together and rehearsed the hand-dealings of God with them; and coming to this matter of their demanding a king, he said: "Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain, that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord, thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."†

Through another prophet we are told that the Lord gave Israel a king in His anger, and took him away in His wrath.‡

These items in the history of Israel clearly prove that the monarchical form of government, as known among men, is not the species of government approved of the Almighty. The Lord Jesus, when with His disciples in the flesh, in Judea, said: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among

you."* The spirit running through these remarks, taken together with the kind of government God established among Israel, and the protest under which a king was granted them, is evidence enough that God designs His children to enjoy larger liberty than is possible under a monarchical government. And this disfavor of heaven is one among many other considerations which leads me to the opinion that the advantages of monarchy are more than outweighed by its disadvantages. Let its friends say what they may for it, let them praise it for its stability, and revere it that, through the hereditary principle which is associated with it, a rule of succession to the head of government is established, that is independent of the passions of mankind; yet I think I shall not be far from the truth when saying that the pride and ambition of strong princes, and the imbecility of weak ones, have led to more civil strife and bloodshed than all the tumult and discord arising from efforts at popular government in republics.

I have thought it proper to make these observations upon the origin and character of government in general (though conscious that they fall far short of being commensurate with the magnitude and dignity of the subject of which they treat) before proceeding directly to the subject of these papers, as they will afford my readers a better opportunity of comprehending remarks to be made in subsequent numbers.

B. H. Roberts.

PLUTARCH ON TRAINING CHILDREN.

To begin at the beginning, I should advise those who would be parents of worthy children not to marry anybody who comes along. To be of dishonorable birth, on the father's or mother's side, is a reproach throughout one's life. Euripides wisely says: "When the foundation of birth has not been rightly laid, descendants can not prosper." A noble treasure of freedom is good birth. It is Euripides, also, who says: "It makes a slave of a man, even if he be stout-hearted, when he is conscious of the misdeeds of his

* I Sam., viii. † I Sam., xii. ‡ Hosea, xiii.

*Matt. xx.