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Between Revivalism and the Social Gospel: The Latter-day Saint Social Advisory Committee, 1916–1922

Thomas G. Alexander

In the nineteenth century, the United States experienced rapid and at times wrenching change. Sociologists and historians have categorized these shifts as "Modernization" and have recognized that most urban–industrial societies have undergone similar changes to one degree or another. The characteristics of Modernization include such things as the development of cities, occupational specialization and industrialization, the adoption of secular and rational norms, an increased democratization of the political process, a decline in agrarianism, and an increased diversity of ideas and life-styles.¹

To many these changes seemed to challenge the existing social order and ideals, and those who felt threatened tried to correct the problems they saw as most pressing. We already know a great deal about the ways in which American Protestantism responded to Modernization, but we know little beyond some impressions about the way in which the Mormons attempted to meet these changes.

What follows is a case study of some of the ways in which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints responded. In order to provide a context, a discussion of the developments within Protestantism and the ways in which the two principal Protestant factions tried to deal with these changes precedes a consideration of the response of the Latter-day Saints to the same challenges. Currently available evidence indicates that while Mormons interacted to some extent with the developments in American Protestantism, their response to Modernization was distinct and deserves more attention than it has received.

degree with Protestants, they did not follow the Protestant lead. Rather, they attempted to develop programs suited to their own needs. In practice, the LDS programs contained elements similar to those found among Protestants, but these seem to have come from common responses to similar problems rather than from a conscious attempt to copy the Protestants.

During the nineteenth century, two movements developed in American Protestantism. In the late 1820s, principally in response to the needs of the industrial city, Revivalists began to promote middle-class Evangelical Protestantism as a means of social control and justification of an individualistic industrial order. Revivalism grew also in the late nineteenth century with the work of such proponents as Dwight Moody, A. C. Dixon, and Reuben Torrey. Also in the late nineteenth century, a second movement developed in Protestantism, emphasizing the need to reform the social order as well as to promote individual morality. Its champions were Social Christians like Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Josiah Strong. In essence, Protestant Christianity had developed a two-party system—one individualistic, the other social.²

The Revivalist party emphasized individual salvation, the need for a moral personal life here on earth, and the attainment of rewards and punishments in the world to come. One form of this movement, Christian fundamentalism, stressed belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, the literal resurrection of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Second Coming, and premillennialism—the belief that Christ would come to usher in a thousand years of peace. Revivalists also opposed active church participation in reform politics, but they worked to deal with what they considered moral issues such as dancing, drinking, profanity, Sabbath breaking, and gambling.³

The Social Christian movement, however, emphasized the need for nothing less than the regeneration of humanity. Social Christians called for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth to create a community worthy of Christ’s presence. Thus, the emphasis was postmillennial: they expected Christ’s second coming after the earth had been regenerated. They, too, supported reforms on moral questions but unlike most Revivalists were quite willing to enter politics on a broad range of social issues as well. Above all, they rejected Revivalism’s emphasis on individual conversion as a means of

improving the condition of man in particular and men in general. All society, not just committed individuals, needed to be cleansed and changed into a kingdom of God on earth. As Walter Rauschenbusch put it, “To the individual, Christianity offers victory over sin and death, and the consummation of all good in the life to come. To mankind it offers a perfect social life, victory over all the evil that wounds and mars human intercourse and satisfaction for the hunger and thirst after justice, equality, and love.”

It was undoubtedly in the attempt to reform society that Social Christianity distinguished itself most from Revivalism. At base, Social Christians tried to implement the principles of the New Testament in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. Working through organizations like the Civic Federation of Chicago and urban social settlements, they were bolstered by the writings of clergymen like Josiah Strong and Walter Rauschenbusch and popular writers like Jacob Riis and W. T. Stead. In addition to clergymen, Social Christians included socially active women like Frances Willard, whose Women’s Christian Temperance Union opposed liquor and championed the rights of labor, and progressive politicians like Theodore Roosevelt, who thought the churches must battle for social justice. In the academic field, economists like John R. Commons and Richard T. Ely called for an amalgamation of social responsibility with economic analysis. Many of the Social Christians supported reforms of the Progressive Era designed to make the industrial system more humane, such as minimum wage and maximum hour laws as well as legislation designed to improve the conditions in slums.

Although Revivalists and Social Christians disagreed on method of solution, they were both responding to problems caused by Modernization and its attendant stresses. Each confronted issues such as urban development, immigration, industrialization, threats to the family, secularization, and challenges to the moral order. Both thought people could be sinful, but the Social Christians thought society as well as individuals could sin.


As Protestantism became even more fragmented during the nineteenth century, did Mormonism, which stood apart from the various parties, find itself in agreement with either Revivalists or Social Christians on any of these questions? What ideas, in other words, did it share and what did it reject from the beliefs of the two Protestant groups? In the first place, it should be clear that neither movement expressed much sympathy for the Latter-day Saints. Nevertheless, as part of a larger Christianity, Mormonism did share a number of things with Protestants.

Perhaps the most clearly shared emphasis with the Revivalists was the belief in the need for personal purity and personal regeneration. Mormons also shared the ideas of the literal resurrection of Christ, the Virgin Birth, and a belief in rewards and punishments in the hereafter. The Mormon concept of salvation, however, with its insistence that all except a select few “sons of perdition” will achieve some degree of glory, was closer to that of the Universalists than the Revivalists. In addition, Mormons did not share a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, even though they did regard it as the “word of the Lord,” as Joseph Smith himself undertook a revision of the holy writ.

For most commentators it has been much easier to see the emphasis on personal purity which Mormons shared with both Revivalists and Social Christians than to see the emphasis on the regeneration of the entire society which differentiates Social Christianity most from Revivalism. This is in part because until recently we have failed to recognize that Mormon millennialism, though different in significant respects from both the Revivalists and the Social Christians, shares elements of both. The one area in which it is closer to that of the Social Christians is its emphasis on building the kingdom of God on earth in preparation for the second coming of Christ.

Unlike the Social Christians, however, Mormons have not generally conceived the kingdom of God to be an abstract concept destined to encompass all society. For Mormons, the kingdom of God on earth

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rests both in discrete time and space. During the nineteenth century, those closest to the Church leadership generally thought that the kingdom of God had been set up on the earth to prepare for the Second Coming. The general Church membership, however, has for the most part interpreted the term with a dual meaning of both the Church on earth today and the kingdom over which Christ will reign during the Millennium. This meaning was essentially canonized in 1899 with the publication of James E. Talmage’s quasi-official Articles of Faith.8

Though the concept of building the kingdom here and now—an essential feature of both Mormon premillennialism and Social Christian postmillennialism—appears in Joseph Smith’s revelations as early as March 1831, the emphasis in Mormonism then was on the imminence of the Second Coming. The Kirtland endowment with its immediate contact between spiritual and temporal beings also supported the view of the Millennium’s imminence.9 Doctrines and practices at Nauvoo, however, emphasized the concept of building the kingdom of God on earth. These included not only the establishment of the Council of Fifty but also the idea of the kingdom’s being a place of refuge. Perhaps most importantly, this idea was inculcated through the Nauvoo temple ceremony which was carried to Utah and which still forms the basis for temple ritual within the Church. Unlike the Kirtland ceremony, which stressed immediate contact with spiritual beings, and unlike the Masonic ritual, the scenario of which is based upon traditions relating to the construction of the Temple of Solomon, the central theme of the Nauvoo ceremony is the redemption of mankind through Christ’s work and the commitment of all members to building the kingdom of God on earth.10

Since the Mormon conception of building the kingdom differs from that of Social Christians, who also want to build the kingdom on earth, and since the general image of the LDS church seems to be that of a conservative denomination closer to Evangelicals and interested

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8Klaus J. Hansen, Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History ([East Lansing]: Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp. 45–46 and passim; James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith, 42d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), pp. 365–66. For some reason, though Talmage’s introduction makes clear that the first edition appeared in April 1899, the copyright date listed in the volumes is 1890 (p. ii–iii).


in preserving the status quo, it is important to realize that Church leaders have at various times tried both to effect internal social reform and to influence the social course of society outside the Church. This is much easier to see in the nineteenth century when measures were taken by the Church to regulate wages and prices and to promote and regulate various businesses and labor organizations.¹¹

The work of members and leaders of the LDS church in promoting measures in the twentieth century similar to those proposed by Social Christians is not as readily evident. There are a number of reasons for this lapse. One is the failure of historians to ask questions which would reveal the efforts of Church members in regenerating society. A second is that writers often were more interested in ferreting out the examples to prove that the Church leaders were all anti-Progressive and inhumane.¹²

Many examples of efforts by Church leaders to influence the larger society and to promote programs consonant with those of both Social Gospel and Revivalist Christianity could be cited. Most useful as a means of seeing the general pattern in the early twentieth century will be a study of the efforts of a single group of Church leaders as they attempted to deal with problems caused by aspects of Modernization, such as social change and urbanization.

Between 1916 and 1922, Church leaders attempted to coordinate efforts to promote both social reform and moral retrenchment through an organization called the Social Advisory Committee, which consisted of representatives of the Council of the Twelve and each of the Church’s auxiliaries. After the demise of the Social Advisory Committee in 1922, efforts to influence the larger society in ways which seem in part consonant with the spirit of the Social Christians

¹¹Dean M. Kelley in Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) defines conservative churches as those which make strong doctrinal and other demands upon their members, and thus defines the Mormons as conservative, pp. 26, 37, 45, 47, 54, 58, and passim. By this definition the Social Gospel would also be conservative. (See Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958], passim.)

¹²Most serious have been books like Frank J. Cannon and Harvey J. O’Higgins’s Under the Prophet in Utah: The National Menace of a Political Priestcraft (Boston: The C. M. Clark Publishing Co., 1911), whose view is that Mormonism was reactionary and monopolistic. Some historians have broached the subject of the Saints involvement in promoting social reform, but not discussed it in depth. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard in The Story of the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976) comment, for instance, that “the Church, too, was concerned with the social ills of society in the changing world of the early twentieth century. In general, however, it did not counsel its members to become involved with the active reform groups that were attracting national followings, though some prominent members did participate” (p. 451). They mention the establishment of the Relief Society Social Welfare Department and several other programs of the Church, but mention the Social Advisory Committee only in passing because it was combined with the Correlation Committee (p. 498). Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton in The Mormon Experience mention some of the activities of the Relief Society, Primary, and YLMIA in connection with Women’s movements in the Church (p. 233). Some more recent examples of cooperation with groups outside Mormon society are discussed in chap. 16, but no mention is made of the Social Advisory Committee.
and in part similar to Revivalist Christians were carried on by various auxiliary organizations, particularly the Relief Society and the Mutual Improvement Association, and most recently by the First Presidency and the Twelve. Thus, it will prove instructive to review the activities of the Social Advisory Committee, to see its impact upon the Church and the larger society, to compare its functions with the types of programs promoted by Revivalist Christians and the Social Gospel movement, and to consider its legacy to twentieth-century Mormonism.

The Social Advisory Committee had its genesis in a letter of 22 September 1916 from the First Presidency to the Primary presidency. The First Presidency asked the Primary Association to cooperate with the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association and the Relief Society in promoting modesty of dress among young women, something which both Revivalists and Social Christians could have supported. Revealing modern styles which were to become even more extreme in the 1920s were already developing during World War I, and a number of Church leaders were concerned about the effect on the moral tone of the community. On 1 November 1916, representatives of the three auxiliaries met and agreed to propose a program including strict chaperonage of girls at parties and dances, moderation in dress rather than the short skirts and extreme styles then appearing, censorship of movies depicting crime, and prohibition of what were then considered extreme forms of dancing based on jazz and popular music. On 8 November the First Presidency informed stake presidents that the women’s auxiliaries would be working systematically on these problems. A week later, Moroni Snow, general secretary of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, wrote that the young men’s organization would support these efforts; and three weeks later, the Deseret Sunday School Union General Board asked Stephen L Richards and board members George D. Pyper and E. G. Gowans to coordinate Sunday School support for the program. At the same time, they asked Elder Richards to meet with representatives of the other auxiliaries to try to coordinate efforts.13

Also on 8 November, the women’s committee adopted the name Social Advisory Committee; and by mid-December, the Sunday School representatives along with John Henry Evans of the Religion Classes General Board proposed a joint meeting of the representatives of the six Church auxiliaries: Sunday School, Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA), Relief Society, Primary, Young

13Minutes and Records of the Social Advisory Committee (SAC), Library—Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives).
Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA), and Religion Classes to coordinate the various efforts. In response, the First Presidency disbanded the women’s committee and appointed a joint committee under the name Social Advisory Committee.

This proved to be only the beginning of a broad expansion of Social Advisory Committee functions. On recommendation of now Apostle Stephen L Richards, President Joseph F. Smith approved the organization of stake and ward level social advisory committees to coordinate social work and retrenchment activities on the local level. As on the general Church level, these committees served to coordinate, organize, and encourage the auxiliaries. The auxiliaries themselves carried out the actual implementation of programs.14

Beyond the efforts to change Church patterns, the committee and its members tried to influence the larger society. The promotion of change included attempts to influence standards at public dances and city recreation activities in the Salt Lake Valley. On a recommendation of the committee, Elder Richards met the manager of Saltair resort in an effort to get him to abolish moonlight dancing and to see that the trains going from Salt Lake to the resort were properly lighted both for moral and physical safety. Similar efforts were undertaken with resorts such as Wandamere, south of Salt Lake City, and Lagoon, near Farmington in Davis County. Elder Richards reported some success though these efforts seem to have lacked long-range effectiveness since the moonlight dances and dimly lighted trains soon returned. In July 1918, the committee met with Charlotte Stewart, YLMIA General Board member and supervisor of Salt Lake’s playgrounds, to work on promoting a better environment including cleanliness and proper supervision in city playgrounds.15

The committee began holding day-long workshops with representatives of stakes and wards throughout Utah, Idaho, and Arizona during the early part of 1918 to determine how the efforts at moral retrenchment had worked after a year of operation. Results were uneven and seem largely to have depended upon the enthusiasm of the stake officers rather than the suggestions of the all-Church committee. The Weber and North Davis stakes had hired dancing teachers, and in the Cache Stake, each ward had a dance director and the stake published a pamphlet on proper dance techniques. Some stakes seemed to be doing practically nothing, but others had undertaken extensive programs. The committee found that many wards and

14SAC Minutes, 29 January 1917.

15Ibid., 25 April, 7 May, 16 July 1918; 27 July and 3 August 1920.
stakes had difficulty in implementing the program because meeting-houses were not constructed with amusement halls (now called cultural halls) where social programs could be carried out.16

The committee began to expand its efforts to include not only moral retrenchment, which could have fit into a Revivalist program, but also social reform which was consonant with Social Christianity. This new emphasis had begun with a December 1916 proposal by John Henry Evans that the committee begin a study of the practice of the case work system of social work. At about the same time, Elder Evans and Rachel Grant Taylor of the YLMIA board tried to get the Utah Education Association to promote social work in Utah’s schools. After the UEA rejected the proposal, the committee decided to develop a volunteer system of social work through the Church organization. These programs were aimed principally at helping the poor and improving the quality of life for all. This effort predated by four years the establishment of a Social Welfare Commission in the state of Utah and, indeed, influenced the later state action.17

In May 1918, the committee reemphasized its efforts to promote the development of professional social work in the Church. Stephen L Richards and Amy Brown Lyman spearheaded this program. The Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency approved a committee proposal to send delegates to the national conference on social work at Kansas City on 14 May 1918 and authorized Elder Richards and Sister Lyman to attend.18

Attendance at this meeting seems to have had an enormous impact not only on the thinking of those who attended but also on the entire committee. Elder Richards and his wife headed the Utah delegation, and the Apostle reported on returning that he had been most impressed by the efforts of social workers throughout the nation to promote measures to prevent problems before they became too serious. “It would be of great advantage,” he said, “if those who labor in Priesthood and auxiliary organizations could understand the opportunities presenting themselves for preventive work.”19 Elder Richards thought this could be achieved best by holding a regional convention in Salt Lake City, arranging for representatives of the national organization to attend, and inducing “our people” to attend the conference. He wanted the Social Advisory Committee to take the lead in promoting such a convention, and he had spoken with

14Ibid., 28 January and 6 March 1918.
17Ibid., 18 December 1916 and 11 January 1917.
18See SAC Minutes of 9 July 1918 for summary of the convention.
19Ibid.
Elwood Mead, then head of the California Land Settlement Board, who was interested in attending. In addition, Sister Lyman had been invited to join the membership committee of the National Social Work Association.

On further consideration, the regional social work conference seemed impractical, but on the suggestion of William A. Morton of the Religion Classes General Board, a convention of Church social workers from the wards and stakes was held in connection with the October 1918 conference. Elder Richards secured approval for the meeting, and a committee consisting of William A. Morton, John H. Taylor of the YMMIA Board, and Frances K. Thomassen, Primary general secretary, arranged the program. Sessions were outlined on such matters as the progress of social work, social centers, the home, playgrounds, amusement halls, home parties, one-act plays, and social dancing.20

Reports indicate that the convention was reasonably successful. Elder Richards spoke on the work of the parents’ class in Sunday School. Amy Brown Lyman emphasized the role of the home in promoting socialization through home evenings, birthday parties, and family dinners. Ann Nebeker of the Primary General Board dealt with playgrounds and social activities, discussing the benefit of play for young and old alike. Oscar A. Kirkham of the YMMIA board led a session on amusement halls and urged their more extensive use.

Owing to the influenza epidemic, the committee did not meet from October 1918 until March 1919 when it was reorganized under President Heber J. Grant’s administration. Stephen L Richards continued as chairman with Oscar A. Kirkham and Amy Brown Lyman as vice-chairmen and Frances Thomassen as secretary.21

Efforts to promote professional social work standards within the Church were redoubled. On Kirkham’s suggestion, in early 1919 the committee began sending out a bulletin on social work. The bulletin was designed to include such matters as the suggestion by Ruth May Fox, YLMIA first counselor, that the attention of the stakes be called to social work being done by various governmental agencies. Amy Brown Lyman and John Henry Evans suggested expanding and dividing the committee into subcommittees to investigate the various phases of social work.

The committee also promoted attendance at the national social work conference at Atlantic City, 1–8 June 1919. Committee members

20Ibid., 16 July and 24 September 1918; see 4 October 1918 for outline of the sessions held.
21Ibid., 3 March 1919.
thought "that the representatives would come back with the feeling that our problems could be attacked in a more scientific way than we had previously had any knowledge of; that the visit would result in a breadth of view and a more intimate acquaintance with up-to-date methods of procedure." Appointed to attend were Amy Brown Lyman, Oscar A. Kirkham, and William A. Morton.22

When the three returned, they reported to a joint meeting of the Social Advisory Committee and members of the auxiliary boards. Stephen L Richards conducted the meeting and emphasized the promotion of the weekly half-holiday on Saturday and an anti-cigarette campaign to discourage the use of tobacco. Elder Kirkham spoke on the need to deal with juvenile delinquency, conditions of sexual immorality, venereal diseases, dancing, censorship of commercial amusements, vegetable gardens, community singing, and community cooperation. Apostle Rudger Clawson expressed his gratitude for the work of the committee and suggested that the members consider the problems suggested and report with plans to deal with these matters.23

From this point, the scope of the activities and interests of the Social Advisory Committee seems to have expanded considerably. Though Stephen L Richards cautioned that it was not advisable for the Church organizations to lose their identity while cooperating with other relief organizations in helping families, he encouraged efforts to expand the work. Oscar A. Kirkham hoped to strengthen the preventive work of the organization, and Amy Brown Lyman expressed the need for more trained social workers, a point which May Anderson of the Primary supported. On 5 August, William A. Morton presented a report on juvenile delinquency, George D. Pyper discussed public welfare agencies and institutions, and May Anderson considered child welfare.24

One of the major problems with which the committee had to grapple was the scope of the Church's interest in such matters as social work. As plans were being laid for a Social Advisory Committee conference in connection with the June conferences of the auxiliaries in 1919, Stephen L Richards pointed out that a number of problems, some of which are mentioned later, had been called to his attention. He believed that some of these problems might fall outside the Church's realm of interest, but he thought that they at least ought to be considered. William A. Morton suggested that the way to

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22Ibid., 20 May 1919.
23Ibid., 1 July 1919.
24Ibid., 15 July and 5 August 1919.
determine whether they fell within the Church’s interest would be to conduct a survey of social conditions. Thus, an empirical rather than dogmatic approach was taken to the problem of scope; and a committee consisting of George D. Pyper, Amy Brown Lyman, Oscar A. Kirkham, Clarissa A. Beesley (of the YLMIA General Board), Ann Nebeker, and William A. Morton was appointed to conduct a social survey.25

In its report, the social survey committee recommended activities to promote Church involvement in the solution of a broad range of social problems. They suggested that the Social Advisory Committee have authority to advise on all phases of welfare work. The survey committee proposed the collection of all facts relevant to juvenile delinquency including betterment societies, juvenile courts, industrial schools, homes for delinquents, and prisons. They recommended the Social Advisory Committee assist in the drafting of laws on these matters and that the Church employment bureau cooperate with the state penitentiary to assist in finding jobs for men ready for release. They proposed also that the Church expand an already-existing domestic science or home economics training program and that the Church appoint chaplains to be in attendance at juvenile court. They pointed to the Smith–Hughes Act and the benefits of the appropriations from the act to Utah. Under the law, new standards of education were to be promoted for students. Students were also to be instructed in health and vocational activities as well as civic and patriotic service. In addition, they proposed that the Social Advisory Committee help to promote the expansion of housing regulations in the state and that the city construct public restrooms in the downtown area. They proposed the expansion of girls camp facilities. They noted that family service work done within the Church ought to be done according to recognized social work standards and that professional social workers ought to be hired.26

After reviewing this report, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve approved appropriation of $5,000 for the Social Advisory Committee to expand its office capability and hire an executive secretary. Arthur L. Beeley, of the University of Utah Department of Sociology and of the YMMIA board, was hired. Stephen L. Richards proposed that $150 per month be used to hire a professional social worker. Amy Brown Lyman had already applied to the First Presidency

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25Ibid., 6 May 1919.
26Ibid., 19 August 1919.
to hire a part-time professional social worker for Relief Society case work, and money was given to her for the purpose.27

It should be evident that committee members did not recognize a division between moral and social questions nor did they shun cooperation with groups outside the Church, secular or religious. Like many Social Christians, they viewed the moral and social aspects as phases of the same problem and, for them, concern for one implied concern for the others.

For the October 1919 conference, for instance, the principal topic of consideration seems to have been dancing styles. In a planning meeting before the program, Elder Richards said that he was of the opinion that the "Shimmie," one of the new dance crazes, "was the most fearful thing ever introduced" and that "the problems of dancing were never quite so great." Amy Brown Lyman proposed and the committee agreed to take a stand against jazz music, and in November, the Church school system in cooperation with the Social Advisory Committee held a clinic at the Deseret Gym on dancing. Dancing instruction was given and lessons on chaperonage, dancing positions, and community cooperation were presented. Other General Authorities cooperating included Elders David O. McKay and John A. Widtsoe.28

In February 1920, E. G. Gowans, Amy Brown Lyman, and Arthur L. Beeley proposed to utilize the Church summer school program, particularly at Brigham Young University, to train social workers and leaders. In cooperation with the Church’s Correlation Committee headed by David O. McKay, Brigham Young University set up a special session in the early summer of 1920. The First Presidency asked that each stake send three persons—one each for a course in teacher training, social and recreational leadership, and charity and relief work.29

To implement Social Advisory Committee proposals, Elders Richards, Beeley, and Kirkham suggested that the ward organization use the meetinghouse as a recreational and social center for the members, almost on the pattern of a settlement house or institutional

27Ibid., 29 September and 7 October 1919.
28Ibid., 29 September 1919; see also the material inserted between the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920. In the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth, this controversy had dealt with the introduction of the waltz. After 1910, the same issues were raised about the Fox Trot and jazz dances. On the nineteenth-century controversy, see Davis Bitton, "Those Licentious Days: Dancing among the Mormons," Saints 2 (Spring 1977): 16-27.
church. This effort, which apparently originated with the Social Advisory Committee, was promoted, particularly during the 1920s, by the First Presidency as new meetinghouses were constructed or old ones renovated.30

The committee also concerned itself with a broad range of other problems. A subcommittee consisting of Edward H. Anderson of the YMMIA General Board; Clarissa Beesley, the YLMIA secretary; and Rachel Grant Taylor was appointed to consider the coordination, systematizing, and enlargement of adult education. George D. Pyper and William A. Morton proposed Church-sponsored motion picture evenings at meetinghouses where wholesome movies were to be shown under Church auspices. Arthur L. Beeley completed a study of urban and rural adolescent activity in the Church. Stephen L Richards served as liaison with the Salt Lake City Social Welfare League, and each of the six general boards agreed to provide $10 per month to support the work of the league.31

Arthur L. Beeley's report on adolescent problems was of particular interest. Perhaps the first time modern techniques of social sampling had been used by the Church, the study showed that a great number of teenage boys and girls were not being reached by Church programs. Particularly in the larger urban centers such as Salt Lake City, there was a great amount of inactivity. The report also indicated problems in rural areas, and, in fact, some seemed in deeper trouble than Salt Lake City. Elder Beeley later completed a study which showed the decline of temple marriage among Church members.32

Equally important were the proposals in the area of sex education. The committee members recognized the need for broad sex education programs within the Church. Reports presented to the committee revealed a general lack of information on sexual behavior and maturation, and committee members were convinced that an adequate Church-promoted sex education program would reduce the number of cases of delinquency among boys and girls. Committees were appointed to attack the problem from the theological, physical, educational, and psychological standpoints, with a charge to construct a program of sexual and moral education for the Church schools, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums. Already in the Ensign Stake, C. B. Stewart had been appointed by the stake presidency to proceed with a

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30Special Meeting of the Social Advisory Committee with Stake and Ward Representatives, SAC Minutes, 5 April 1920.
31Ibid., 16 December 1919; 17 February, 8 and 23 March 1920.
32Ibid., 8 March and 5 April 1920; [Arthur L. Beeley,] 'Studies in Church Work, No. 2, Preliminary Study of Temple and non-Temple Marriages,' SAC Records. Beeley seems to have had a pro-rural bias since many of the rural areas in his study were in worse condition than the cities, yet he singled the cities out for special comment.
sex education program, and Stephen L. Richards urged the stake to go ahead with its plans. A subcommittee from the Social Advisory Committee, made up of Arthur L. Beeley, Adam S. Bennion of the Sunday School General Board, Clarissa B. Beesley, Rachel Grant Taylor, and E. G. Gowans, was to propose a Church-wide program. Available evidence indicates that the program was never adopted Church-wide.33

One of the important activities of the Social Advisory Committee during 1920 and 1921 was its support of an anti-tobacco campaign. In May 1920, John Henry Evans, Sarah Eddington of the Relief Society Board, Newell K. Young of the Religion Class Board, and Ann Nebeker were appointed to propose a broad-ranging anti-cigarette campaign. Their suggestions were quite comprehensive and included a political-action program, pamphleteering, and an anti-tobacco week.34

Shortly after the beginning of the legislative session in 1921, Edward Southwick of Utah County introduced a bill to accomplish the goals of the committee, and members of the committee were asked to support it. Adam S. Bennion, Edward H. Anderson, and George E. Pyper met with the First Presidency to seek permission to have petitions circulated in each ward in Utah on Sunday, 23 January, endorsing the Southwick bill. Arthur Beeley urged committee members to counteract pressure brought to bear against the legislation by business interests and urged the individual members of the committee to use their influence to promote support for the bill. The bill eventually passed, but difficulties occurred in its enforcement, and it was repealed by the 1923 legislature.

Another important activity of the committee was the coordination of various charitable homes established by the auxiliaries. One of these was the Lund Home for boys, which was operated by Zion's Aid Society in cooperation with the Religion Classes Board and Granite Stake. By 1919, the home cared for between twenty-five and thirty boys, and it was virtually self-supporting, as the Church appropriated only $500 per year for its operation. Resident boys raised vegetables and produced many other items to help support themselves and the Lund Home. The Granite Stake facility became too small, however, and the First Presidency approved the purchase of a farm in Centerville for the home.35

33SAC Minutes, 17 February, 27 April, and 4 May 1920.
35SAC Minutes, 21 October and 19 December 1919; Anthony H. Lund Journal, 18 March and 22 September 1920, Church Archives.
Another effort was the YLMIA’s Beehive House for single women. By March 1920, the YLMIA General Board had given serious consideration to providing a home for girls who were going to school or working in Salt Lake City. They recommended to the Social Advisory Committee that the Beehive House, formerly the residence of Church Presidents, be used for the purpose, and at the suggestion of William A. Morton, the use was expanded to make the house a social center as well. Letters were sent to bishops and stake presidents throughout the Church advising them of the facility. By 1 October 1920, thirty girls lived at the Beehive House, paying a modest rental. The Beehive House also operated a referral service to find rooms for girls that could not be housed there because of lack of space. The YLMIA also operated a traveler’s aid station at the Interurban Railway Station in Salt Lake City to direct girls to suitable places of lodging. The traveler’s aid service was later taken over and expanded by the Relief Society.36

Another problem was day care for children from LDS homes where the mother was gone during the day. In September 1920, it was reported that 90 percent of the children being cared for by a non-Mormon day nursery on Salt Lake’s West Side were LDS. The Primary Association accepted the responsibility of trying to provide day care and sent a sister to Denver to take a special twelve-week course in social welfare work to help train her in care in the home. Thereafter, most of the help seems to have been given on the ward level.37

Through the newsletter, edited in 1920 by Arthur Beeley, the committee announced support for a wide range of programs. These included the Presbyterian campaign against prostitution and venereal disease, promotion of the work of the Social Service Society of Salt Lake City against lotteries, and cooperation with the Social Welfare League of Salt Lake City on which a number of Social Advisory Committee members, such as Stephen L Richards and Arthur L. Beeley, served.38

Owing in part to efforts of Amy Brown Lyman in the legislature, the state of Utah established a State Welfare Commission in April 1921. Milton Bennion of the University of Utah and the Salt Lake Social Welfare League as well as the Sunday School General Board, was appointed chairman; Amy Brown Lyman became vice-chairman,

36Ruth M. Fox, Rachel Grant Taylor, and Clarissa A. Beesley to Social Advisory Committee, 9 March 1920; William A. Morton to SAC, 15 March 1920; Financial Report of the Beehive House, 17 June to 31 December 1920, all in SAC Records; SAC Minutes, 16, 23, and 30 March; Heber J. Grant Diary, 1 October 1920, Church Archives.
37SAC Minutes, 28 September, 19 October 1920, and entry following 9 October 1920.
38Social Advisory Committee Newsletter, 1 and 23 March 1920, SAC Records.
and Arthur L. Beeley served as a member. Later Sister Lyman introduced enabling legislation to provide for state cooperation in child and mother care under the Sheppard–Towner Act. The committee worked to expand these efforts to the local level. Meetings were held in connection with the April, June, and October 1921 conferences. Surveys were taken of the work being done in the various areas of the Church, and attempts were made to coordinate the work and encourage stepped-up activity in dealing with moral and social problems.

In late 1920, a change took place in the Social Advisory Committee which sounded its death knell. In November, the First Presidency consolidated the committee with the Correlation Committee under David O. McKay, the Correlation Committee having been organized in 1913 to design lessons, activities, and teacher training for the priesthood quorums and auxiliaries. The consolidation apparently came about in a move to unify all efforts at interorganizational coordination. Now, instead of coordinating activities of the various auxiliaries and recommending courses of action, the Social Advisory Correlation Committee intruded into programs and proposed divisions of responsibility among the various auxiliaries and quorums. The committee made its recommendation in a report to the First Presidency on 29 March 1921. This apparent attempt to avoid duplication seems to have backfired because it simply stepped on too many toes. The First Presidency rejected the report, and the Social Advisory Correlation Committee was abolished in 1922. Thereafter, the work which had previously been done by the various auxiliaries under the coordination of the Social Advisory Committee was continued by the auxiliaries and coordinated by the First Presidency and the Twelve.

Many of the previous programs were continued and expanded. The Relief Society, for instance, thanks largely to Amy Brown Lyman, who served as its general secretary, later as counselor in the presidency, and then as its president, continued to promote social work. In fact, the term “welfare work” came to be used in the Church in place of “helping the poor,” largely because of the new emphasis. The YMMIA and YLMIA continued to emphasize recreational and social programs and to some extent a social perspective on Christianity


**SAC Minutes, 9 November 1920: Report of the Social Advisory and Correlation Committee, 29 March 1921; First Presidency to Social Advisory–Correlation Committee, 5 October 1922; SAC Minutes, 9 December 1922.**
largely because of the efforts of board members like Ephraim E. Ericksen.41

This emphasis was evident beyond the auxiliaries. At the 1927 Aspen Grove BYU Summer School, Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* was the text for one course of study.42 A number of young men from the Seminary and Institute System went to the University of Chicago to study under scholarly proponents of Social Christianity like Shailer Mathews.43 These efforts continued in part because of sympathetic General Authorities like Stephen L Richards of the Council of the Twelve and Anthony W. Ivins in the First Presidency.

In retrospect, one can see much that the Social Advisory Committee accomplished. Perhaps most important was the role of social catalyst. The committee and its constituent organizations are a prosopographer's dream. Its membership interlocked with the important social service, governmental, and educational institutions in the state of Utah. Thus, during its existence, the committee became a focus for social and retrenchment work. Afterward, that function was played by the presiding quorums and general auxiliary boards, still in cooperation with state agencies and reform groups. Where the state was derelict in its duty of providing social services, the Church set up its own social work system and then used these interlocking associations to get the state to catch up with the times. Though the Church had already begun to use statistical measures of activity long before the Social Advisory Committee came into existence, the systematic use and interpretation of such information for social purposes seems to have originated with the committee and to have owed most to Arthur Beeley. In addition, the work of moral retrenchment had been a long-time central theme in the thought of Church leaders, and this emphasis was reinforced by the Social Advisory Committee.

It is also possible to see the direction in which the Church moved after the demise of the Social Advisory Committee. Some in the Church, particularly those who emphasized the individualistic and premillennial, felt that the social emphasis promoted by the Social Advisory Committee and supported by the officers of such auxiliaries as the Relief Society and YMMIA was destructive of spirituality. In

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42The copy of Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* mentioned in the text is in the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU and is inscribed "George H. Brimhall, BYU Aspen Grove, 1927."
February 1928, Annie Wells Cannon, a member of the Relief Society General Board came to see President Heber J. Grant with the complaint that Relief Society President Clarissa S. Williams ignored her counselors and that Amy Brown Lyman was actually running the Relief Society. In Sister Cannon's view, "the spirit of the Gospel and religion seem to have disappeared, and it seems to be a social welfare organization." This concerned President Grant, but in October 1928, when Louise Yates Robinson became president, Sister Lyman was called as first counselor.

After 1933, the social outreach beyond the Church organization which had characterized the late teens and early 1920s seems to have declined. In part this may have been due to the influence of J. Reuben Clark's clearly conservative emphasis. It may have resulted in part from the estrangement some Latter-day Saints felt to the unlinking of moral from social and economic reform, which characterized the New Deal but which had been foreign to moderate Progressives. In part it may have been influenced by the antagonism exhibited by President Grant and some other General Authorities to the New Deal social programs. The death of Anthony W. Ivins, who as a member of the First Presidency had been a strong supporter of social programs, also may have been responsible in part. Perhaps most important was the desire to meet spiritual as well as social needs of members, needs which seemed only partially met under the old emphasis.

And yet, a number of the social programs promoted under the auspices of the Social Advisory Committee have had many long-lasting effects. The emphasis on the ward as a social as well as a religious unit, which the committee promoted, was, in a sense, a twentieth-century and urban reinterpretation of the nineteenth-century view of the Church and kingdom as a focal point for all aspects of life including those which others might have considered secular. Henceforth, the Church was to fill, within a religious context, those needs not being met in a satisfactory way by the secular society. Thus, the Mormon ward provided recreational activities like dances and movies, competing with those seen as unwholesome, such as the ones supplied by Saltair and the local cinema. Various types of social services developed to fill the same vacuum and continued to develop during the 1930s with the introduction of the Welfare Program.

It is also possible to assess the meaning of this social experiment in comparison with early twentieth-century Protestant Christianity.

44Heber J. Grant Diary, 24 and 27 February 1928, Church Archives.
Like the Revivalist churches, the LDS church continued to emphasize the literality of the New Testament message of the birth, ministry, and resurrection of Christ and moral regeneration. Like Moderate Social Christians, Mormons were willing to go beyond normal moral issues in their attempt to influence legislation and public policy and to order the lives of Church members. The crucial difference, however, lay in the Mormon interpretation of the nature of the kingdom of God. A definition of the kingdom of God as the Church rather than as all Christianity or all of society allowed Church members to set limited and immediately realizable goals. Efforts to influence the legislature and the larger society outside the Church were often based upon programs such as social work which were already developed and functioning successfully within the Church. The Church itself, then, became the testing ground for social programs much like the social settlements or institutional churches of Social Christianity though for a differently defined kingdom. In general, one may say that Mormonism in its social aspect, while not connected with Protestantism, fell somewhere between the two Protestant wings.

It fell between Social and Revivalist Christianity in other ways as well. Refusing to take a dogmatic stand on evolution during the first three decades of the twentieth century, members of the First Presidency also questioned the literality of certain Old Testament passages such as the story of Jonah. At the same time, Church leaders insisted on the historicity of the Book of Mormon, which was in some ways analogous to the Revivalists’ emphasis on the literality of the Bible.

If the Church leaders rejected the ideas of the right wing of the Revivalist Movement, they also rejected those of the left wing of Social Christianity. There was little to be seen of the general attack on wealth, support of the labor movement, or the class-consciousness of the sort found in the left wing of the Social Gospel movement. In Mormonism there were theoretically no classes, and both the need for brotherhood in building the kingdom of God on earth and the generally sympathetic attitude which Church leaders had for the business community made such attacks on wealth unlikely.


47For a discussion of the various groups within the Social Gospel, see May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America, pp. 163–202. Members of the Social Advisory Committee certainly do not fit into the group May labels “Conservative Social Christianity,” since they were willing to support and promote positive social reform; yet they stopped short of the group he labels “Radical Social Christianity,” since they generally opposed socialism and were divided on governmental ownership of utilities.
After 1933, the LDS church differentiated itself even more from Protestantism. The internal social emphasis and the idea of building the kingdom of God continued among the Mormons with the development of a comprehensive welfare program. Church leaders, however, began increasingly to insist on defining any public questions as moral so that social questions such as the development of public welfare have in recent years been generally excluded from consideration within the Church.\textsuperscript{48} Still, the emphasis on building the kingdom on earth preparatory to the Second Coming and the rejection of Revivalism continues to separate the Latter-day Saints from conservative Revivalists.

In part the changes in attitude toward social reform reflect a traditional LDS aversion to secularization and thus to the secularization of the reform movement since the 1930s. Where Social Christians acknowledge their inspiration in the message of the New Testament, recent reformers have often ignored or downplayed the religious content of their program for social justice. Beyond this, the development of a broad and rather extensive federal and state welfare and social service apparatus with the coordinate intrusion into the lives and personal affairs of citizens has seemed to many too great a price to pay for social justice outside the Church. As a result, the Church has tended to focus its attention on internal concerns perhaps more than ever before since the nineteenth century. It is, however, a peculiar sort of inward focusing which includes an enormous proselyting effort designed to convert others to a kingdom encompassing both a religious movement and a new social order. Whereas, in the context of social questions, during the 1920s, the LDS church offered a middle way between Revivalist Protestantism and Social Christianity, today, by contrast, it offers an alternative outside of, and apart from, American Protestantism.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48}I am referring here to official pronouncements over the signature of the First Presidency rather than unofficial positions which might be taken by particular General Authorities.