

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

AN ADDRESS

To the officers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

Dear Brethren and Sisters.—It has been a practice in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sanctioned by the word of the Lord, to fast and pray, and in this manner to seek for that faith which Saints should possess, and obtain that spirit of humility which we are commanded to cultivate.

Shortly after the arrival of the people in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, the first Thursday in each month was set apart as a day of fasting and prayer. The members of the Church were enjoined to bring on that day their contributions for the relief and sustenance of the poor, and hand them to the Bishop of the ward.

At the time of the adoption of this regulation it was very convenient for the people generally to meet together in their places of worship on that day. The conditions were such that they, being of one faith, employers and employed, could leave their labor and devote a few hours to the worship of the Lord.

For many years these meetings were well attended, and they were of a most interesting character, and were a comfort and a strength to all who shared in them, as it was the practice for persons of both sexes to bear their testimony and take active part in them in each ward under the direction of the bishopric.

As the years rolled by, conditions changed, and it became more difficult for the people generally, and especially those in steady employment, to attend these meetings, until at the present time they have dwindled to such an extent that comparatively few have the opportunity of attending them. Thursday as a day of fasting and prayer in the Church no longer serves the object for which it was intended.

Our attention has been called to this subject, and after mature deliberation, it has been decided to change the day that has heretofore been devoted to this purpose. Instead of the customary assemblages in the various wards throughout Zion on the first Thursday in each month, we have concluded to set apart the first Sunday in every month as the day for the regular fast meeting.

Hereafter, therefore, we desire the Latter-day Saints, under the direction of the Presidents of Stakes and the Bishops, to meet in their several places

of worship on the afternoon of the first Sunday in each month, whenever it can be done conveniently, and devote the meeting to the administration of the Sacrament, to the bearing of testimony by the members of the Church, to the blessing of children and the confirming of members in the Church, and such other services as have usually been attended to at such meetings. We feel assured that excellent results will follow the giving of members of the Church an opportunity to bear their testimony to each other and to seek for the gifts which the Lord has promised to those who keep His commandments.

Care should also be taken on such occasions to see that the wants of the poor are relieved by the contributions of the Saints in their behalf, that no cry of the indigent or suffering shall arise from our land in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

In Salt Lake City, instead of the people meeting in the Tabernacle on the afternoon of the first Sunday in each month, we have concluded that it will be better for that service to be dispensed with, and for the Latter-day Saints to meet in their several wards on that afternoon, so as to give all the members of the ward, including the aged and infirm, and others who are unable to go to the Tabernacle, an opportunity to participate in the fast meeting and share in the blessings of the occasion. In other Stakes where general meetings are held as in this city, we suggest that they also be dispensed with on the first Sunday of each month, and that the Saints meet in their places of worship in the several wards.

In some places the custom has arisen to consider it a fast to omit eating breakfast. This is not in accordance with the views and practice of the past. When fasts were observed in the early days, it was the rule to not partake of food from the previous day until after the meeting in the afternoon of the fast day. In making donations to the poor also it has been the understanding that the food that would be necessary for the two meals should be donated to the poor, and as much more as those who are liberally inclined and have the means may feel disposed to give.

In giving this counsel to the Church upon this subject, we include all the missions where the Elders are laboring, either in the United States or in foreign lands. We think this arrangement will suit the

convenience and circumstances of all the Latter-day Saints throughout the world, and we would like it to be observed by all the organized branches of the Church in every land, so that our fasting and praying may be uniform and the time be understood by all.

Before closing this address to the Saints, we feel led to say that if there should be sickness or any evil resting upon or threatening the people, these meetings furnish an excellent opportunity to bring such afflictions and troubles before the Lord. By approaching Him in the spirit of humility and union, we can supplicate Him to remove these afflictions or evils from the individuals or from the people. Our past experience has proved to us how willing our Father in Heaven is to hear our cries in the hours of extremity and difficulty, when we approach Him in a proper spirit and with proper faith. He is quick to hear the cries of His people, and He has promised us that if we will draw near unto Him, He will draw near unto us. Such occasions as these, therefore, ought to be taken advantage of by the afflicted, whether in an individual or in a collective capacity.

With constant prayers for your welfare and happiness and the prosperity of the work of God,

We are your brethren,
WILFORD WOODRUFF,
GEORGE Q. CANNON,
JOSEPH F. SMITH,
First Presidency.

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

Those who have received the spirit of the Gospel in this dispensation have a high appreciation of the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been organized by divine guidance, not only in the inception of the work of instituting the Church at the outset of its career in the fullness of times, but also for its continuous operation as a Church and in every branch or department thereof. For the perfection of Church work the Lord always has had among a people whom He recognized as His those whom He designated and honored as His servants. In every department of His work those whom He called and commissioned possessed the authority or keys to operate in that department.

As the presiding officer of the Church in the early Christian era, Peter had committed to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, being associated in his quorum with those two other Apostles, James and John, who partook of the experience upon the mount of transfiguration. These officers acted by virtue of the authority conferred upon them. As in the case of the remark of the Savior to the chief Apostle, Peter, the latter was