

Prayer by Bishop O. F. Whitney.

The choir sang:

Behold the great Redeemer die,
A broken law to satisfy.

The Priesthood of the Ninth Ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

addressed the congregation. It may perhaps seem somewhat peculiar, he said, to those who are present as visitors, that Elders in Israel should speak to the congregations of Saints extemporaneously, and that they should be called upon frequently without notice, that their testimony should be always ready, and they themselves ready to bear it before any assembly or private individual. This is one of the principles of our creed and religious practice, that, as in days gone by, our Father in heaven was able and willing to inspire those who stood forth to speak and teach humbly in His name with the Spirit of Truth and the power of discernment that they could recognize and understand what principles and topics were appropriate to the occasion, so can He do today, and so does He act with reference to any of those who hold the Priesthood and who undertake or attempt to discharge the duties connected with that calling in humility and sincerity. We believe further that as in the past God frequently selected the weak things of earth wherewith to accomplish His great purposes, and to bring about the fulfilment of His Almighty designs, so today does He oftentimes speak through the mouths of those who are comparatively weak and feeble, provided they will place themselves in His hands as willing instruments for the accomplishment of good.

We think that holy men should speak now, as in bygone days, as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and the influence of the Spirit of God can be invoked and called down from heaven by that faith and the sincere prayers of the congregation.

We do not think it would be proper for us as Latter-day Saints to set apart certain men to be our preachers and teachers, who should make a business of that, come before a congregation with studied phrases and set words and thoughts already matured in their minds, and determined upon as the ones that should be presented on a particular occasion. To a very great extent, he who does so binds the Spirit and prevents the free exercise of the power of inspiration.

We do not conceive, however, that this is in any way an excuse for idleness and sloth in the study that should be bestowed upon the things of God. We believe that it is right and proper for all to store their minds with knowledge, information, and truth, and to gather such from all quarters—from good books and from the teachings of wise men, and that they shall accompany their studies with prayer, recognizing by their practice the authority and power of the greatest

Teacher of all, that when they stand in the discharge of their duties as teachers in Israel they may have some knowledge within their minds upon which the Spirit may draw as upon a store.

As Latter-day Saints we have been characterized by those who are not of our faith as a most peculiar people, differing from others in many of our tenets and religious practices. Indeed the Latter-day Saints themselves admit that they are a strange and peculiar people if judged from the standpoint of other sects and denominations. It would be difficult to enumerate all the peculiarities, perhaps, which distinguish this people; but, among others, they believe implicitly in the exercise of faith towards the Godhead, consisting of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer and the Savior of all flesh, and in the Holy Ghost.

This faith about which the Latter-day Saints talk so much, and to which they bear testimony as occasion offers, is a power and an influence which are expected to pervade the whole of their lives—not a faith that shall be employed only when convenience favors its use, not a faith that shall be exercised merely during the time of prosperity, when the sunshine of happiness falls about the Church, and when individuals feel that they are blessed indeed with the spirit and influence of peace; but a faith also that shall support them in the face of tribulation and trial, and that shall be a sustenance unto them, even when their enemies speak against them and they find persecution around, as the clouds of a coming storm; a faith which shall teach them this great lesson—to acknowledge the hand of God in all His dealings with men upon this earth; a faith which shall teach them to look upon their Heavenly Parent as the God of the universe and One who holds control over the influences and elements of nature, and also over the hearts and thoughts and even the possessions of men; a faith which shall teach them to judge liberally and not to say, because perhaps some personal or selfish aim of theirs has been frustrated, that therefore the Church is wrong and that this faith is of little avail.

There is one other characteristic of the faith of a Latter-day Saint, namely, that his is not a faith consisting of words and belief and thought only, but a faith that must be substantiated and proved by works. We consider that a man who professes a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and then refuses or neglects to do the things which the Savior declared were indispensable to the acquisition of salvation is one whose faith is hollow and hypocritical. A belief in the Lord Jesus Christ consists in more than a mere acknowledgment in words that He died to save us. It consists in a willing, earnest and sincere observance of all the tenets which He has taught and all the requirements which He has made of His faithful followers.

The man who neglects willfully to

do that which his Maker has demanded at his hands, who gives his life unto the acquisition of false precepts and the following of vices, must not hope that mercy shall be arbitrarily extended unto him. Thus it follows that repentance is indispensable unto all who hope to secure forgiveness of their evil deeds.

We think it is necessary that a man should be baptized according to the form and manner which God has revealed and that this baptism should be performed by one who is called or set apart under the authority of heaven to do such works and ordinances, even as Aaron was called by the voice of revelation, coming through the mouths of those who have been established as the oracles of God by His own almighty word.

It is not the Latter-day Saints alone who acknowledge at the present time that there is a power more than that of earth existing in the midst of this Church. Our enemies look with wonder and awe at its almost miraculous development since its organization. Many leading thinkers of the day have declared that such a system of organization and such a grand plan as prevails in this Church could not have been established, or conceived, in the mind of man alone. It would seem scarcely natural that from six members, in the face of constant opposition, the Church of God could have developed into its present proportions, were it not for the fact that the hand of the Almighty has been over it, and that He, its Protector, has permitted only such persecutions and tribulations to come as have been necessary for the development and advancement of this work. In this the true Saints of the Almighty acknowledge His hand and thank Him for those tribulations.

Another principle and feature of our belief is that man, standing as he does upon earth as a free agent in the eyes of his God, has the opportunity, privilege, and right to do as he will, in spite of all the influences that might be brought to bear upon him to the contrary. We believe that a man will follow, to a very great extent, the dictates of his own conscience; and if that conscience be a pure and holy one, and he nourishes that purity and holiness, he will do works that are pure and holy. But in regard to the man who sins by his own free will and choice—not because his Maker is pleased to see him sin—we believe it is possible, according to the plan of our Almighty Father, for him to be brought back into His presence, provided he will do the works demanded by Him at the hands of His obedient children.

To make a very plain and bold statement, we believe that men are indispensable in the eyes of God if His plans are not to be frustrated; but we believe and know also that there is living upon earth no single individual who is indispensable to the progress of the work of God; that no man living shall say to himself he is of such importance and that his labors are of such indispensable necessity