

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

Elder Francis M. Lyman, President of the European Mission, Reviews the Work of the Latter Days; Refers to Its Advancement in the Midst of Bitter Opposition, and Bears Testimony That it is the Work of God, That Jesus Lives, and That He is Directing Preparations for His Second Coming.

From the moment when the boy, Joseph Smith, full of joy and hope, made known to his former religious friends the great manifestations he had received from heaven, there has been a bitter opposition raised against the work of the Lord. Nearly ten years before the word "Mormon" was heard among modern peoples, persecution had begun. Before a single principle of the new religion was declared, except faith in God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, as personal beings who had the power and inclination to reveal themselves to mortal man, attempts had been made to take the young Prophet's life. Like the great red dragon that John the Revelator saw, the power of evil stood ready to swallow up the divine work that was brought forth in these latter days.

As new light came by revelation and honest souls began to accept the doctrines, opposition became more general and manifested itself in many ways. Malignant persecutions were instituted. Men were threatened and many times accomplished, and the unpopular people were driven from their homes. False reports were circulated, and these have been the weapons most commonly used. The most wicked things have been told about the Latter-day Saints falsely, until a prejudice has been built up mountain high. Many good, conscientious people have been deceived and like Paul have even fought vigorously against the truth, thinking they were doing good. Their sincerity has, however, rendered their mistaken attitude right nor the work they sought to overthrow wrong.

GOD'S WAY NOT MAN'S WAYS.

The ways of the Lord are so different from the ways of men that it would be very strange if they did not come into strong contrast, even if the ever-watchful evil one were not present to stir up opposition. Under the inspiration of the Lord, thousands have left their homes in Europe and different parts of America and have gathered with the Saints in Zion. To do this they have had to make sacrifices, and many times their course seemed from the merely human standpoint to be foolish indeed. The inquiry has frequently been made, "Why must you go there? Can you not worship God here as well as at any other place?" There is no compulsion or worldly inducement of any kind, yet the Lord has led His people together. The world has not seen the reason for the movement, in some cases has attempted to stop it, and yet has been astonished at the success attained by the united people.

The Lord's way is also illustrated in His requirement that the Saints pay tithes. Men who look on the matter from a worldly standpoint declare that such a tax is too great for people to pay, especially the poor. They ask why the matter of giving is not left to the individual so that he may donate for the sake of his religion just what he desires. No one pays tithing who does not believe in it and do it voluntarily, but the Lord commands every member, whether rich or poor, to give a tenth of his income and promises certain blessings to those who comply with the law. No Saint that has paid his tithing faithfully doubts the material advantage of doing so, and then there is the

greater satisfaction in knowing that he has discharged his debt to the Lord and has not robbed Him. He feels that it is no burden or injustice to pay a tenth back when the Lord has given him the whole.

MISSIONARY WORK.

The missionary work carried on by the Latter-day Saints is another striking contrast to conditions in the world. The president calls upon hundreds of men each year to leave their families, farms, business, schools, professions, or whatever occupation they may have and journey forth to some part of the world, paying their own way thither and sustaining themselves during several years' absence out of their own means, not only not receiving remuneration, but even bearing their own expenses. Men, religious and irreligious, look upon this sacrifice with wonder. They do not at first believe that such conditions really prevail. When convinced that the Elders are actually supporting themselves, they begin to look on the Church as something tyrannical in making such unheard of demands upon its members. In times of peace no government requires so much devotion from its citizens; and no business firm ever calls upon its employees to give such service. Yet the missionaries go gladly, feeling it an honor to do their humble part in preaching the Gospel. They do not go to please men, but for the love of God and the desire to bring salvation to His children. There is no ulterior purpose in their service. The things of this world and its enjoyments they and their families could far better obtain without making this tremendous sacrifice. And yet there is a joy and blessing in it that no other course would afford.

Every other respects the Gospel of our Redeemer is so different from the theories, systems and institutions that have grown up under human influences alone, that the world naturally opposes the people of the Lord, especially when the world is great and mighty and the Saints are few and lowly. But outside of this antagonism that ever asserts itself whenever a new idea, new truth or reform finds earnest advocates and begins to grow, there has been another strong influence at work. Satan, the enemy of the Lord and the adversary of men's souls, has used every power he controls to oppose the work. He has raised mobs and by brute force driven the Saints from their possessions in the hope of dispersing them. When they gathered and made homes in another place, he slew the leaders and others, and sought to exterminate the rest by mobs or by driving them into the wilderness to perish from the elements. When they had begun to make the wilderness blossom, he led an army out to wage war against them. These are some of the persecutions that have been inspired by the evil one. And yet this shocking injustice and these horrid crimes raised almost no outcry from the people of the world, for Satan, the father of lies, had scattered everywhere such a fabric of falsehood that people could not see through clearly and distinguish the right and the wrong. The report went into the world that the Latter-day Saints were a wicked and impure people, guilty of all sins and corruption. The seeds of falsehood have been sown by men and women, yet in it all, as in the murder of the Prophet,

etc., the spirit of the devil has been manifest.

SATAN'S EFFORTS.

At different times Satan has attempted to crush the people at one blow and leave no vestige of the work, but failing in this he has sought to hinder new converts from entering on the way of salvation. When the name of "Mormon" became an object of ridicule or fear, or both, it required strong faith and great determination to accept the unpopular doctrines. By this means communities and governments have been made hostile and have hindered or entirely held back the advancement of the truth into such places as they controlled.

Yet the opposition of the evil one as manifested in lies, persecution, murder and resulting unpopularity of the plan of salvation is as logical as it is that signs follow believers. Was the work of the Lord ever on the earth when such opposition was not shown? The Gospel never will become popular until Satan is bound. The Savior comforted His disciples by saying that they were blessed when men should revile and persecute them and say all manner of evil against them falsely for His sake, for thus were the Prophets before them persecuted. His words are as applicable today as they were then. Satan, who had influence enough in the world to cause the righteous John to be ignominiously beheaded, to have the words of the world called Beelzebub, judged as a blasphemer and crucified, to bring the faithful Apostles to unnatural deaths and finally to triumph over the Church of God on earth, has not become so gentle that he will permit the Church to rise again and grow in influence without a bitter struggle. One might as well expect evil to turn into good, as to see the true Gospel of our Lord go forth in the world unopposed by all the powers of hell.

WICKEDNESS NOT SANCTIONED.

To those who will listen to testimony it is my desire to say that no wickedness nor corruption has ever been sanctioned or tolerated by the Church. I am competent to testify in this matter, for my life has been spent among the Latter-day Saints. My memory extends back to the very first leaders, and I have had a most intimate acquaintance with all the prominent men since that time. I have met and talked with two of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and heard their staunch testimony that they actually did see the angel and hear his voice, and that they beheld the plates of gold on which was engraved the sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of America. I know the man who set in type the first edition of this book and heard him state that the financial obligation entered into for publishing it was most honorably discharged. My experience has not been confined to any particular place, but I have seen the Saints and watched minutely the workings of the Church organization at home and abroad, in every state of Zion and in many mission fields.

NO SUCH THING AS TYRANNY.

There is no such thing as tyranny known in the Church. Those who accept the Gospel do so of their own free will. Although the Elders preach earnestly the plan of salvation, they do not urge people to be baptized. The time for taking that step must be determined by the convert, after coming into harmony with the conditions that the Lord has laid down for those who desire forgiveness of sins and membership in His fold. Every requirement that is ever made upon a member is based on his or her faith, and if faith is lacking no suggestion of compulsion is thought of. Members pay their tithing, go on missions, reside with their families to build up colonies on the frontier, and do other works of sacrifice because they believe the Gospel and have faith that the officers of the Church are inspired. They could refuse to do any or all of these things and have answer only to their conscience for their neglect.

The principle on which officers of the Church and of all its organizations hold their positions is a just one. They

are chosen by inspiration of the Lord through His Priesthood, but the members are recognized as having rights of inspiration also. There is no one that can hold his place against the will of a majority of the members. Upon appointment the name is submitted to them for approval or rejection, and after that, at frequent intervals, once, twice, or four times a year, they are called upon to declare whether they will retain and sustain him in office. These votes are not dead forms, but are actual manifestations of the desires of the members. Sometimes they refuse to accept or to sustain those who are proposed for positions, and in such cases new names must be submitted. That such occurrences are rare is an indication of the unity in the Church, and the oneness of the spirit enjoyed by both officers and members.

To say that the Church is ruled by its Priesthood is no more than to say that a republic is ruled by its citizens, for every worthy man in the Church is given some portion of that divine authority. All of these have a ministry and bear some part of the responsibility of the work. They can be, therefore, no gulf between Priesthood and laity among the Latter-day Saints.

PENALTY FOR WRONGDOING.

The only penalty any member may suffer from the Church for wrongdoing is that he be disfellowshipped or excommunicated. This is indeed extremely serious and cannot be done arbitrarily. Every case must have a hearing and this in the presence of the accused if he desires it. He has also an opportunity of having witnesses and evidence heard in his defense. To guard against errors of judgment, appeal may be taken from court to court until the First Presidency review the case in session. Whether justice has been done. Whenever right is outraged, it is corrected and those guilty are rebuked. No officer is so high that he cannot be called to account for his actions. He may be tried for transgression just as any member of the Church. Those who are not of us have often resorted to the Church courts in order that difficulties might be settled fairly and without delay. So far they have never complained of lack of justice. The tribunals of the Saints, which render their decisions on all matters temporal or spiritual, wherein difficult work for those who are without charge and unvindicated by money considerations, are the surest safeguards against oppression that can exist among a people.

Nowhere have the poor and the aged better care than among the Saints. While idleness is discommenced most known. Provision is also made to provide work for those who are without yet the worthy poor are not permitted to suffer if they make their wants known. Provision is also made to have the temporal as well as the spiritual condition of the members reported to the presiding officer in every place, so that the needy and afflicted may be discovered and their wants supplied. Teachers are required to make visits at least monthly to every family wherever the Church organization is complete. The offerings and tithes are used in part to supply the needs of the poor.

CHURCH REVENUES.

The tithing paid by members and their offerings form the revenues of the Church. From these means houses of worship and temples are built, educational institutions are sustained, the poor are provided for and those who are giving their whole time to Church work are supported. What these receive is not payment for preaching the Gospel, but having no time to devote to private labor or business, they must have some means to live upon. The missionaries and officers who are required to devote only a part of their time to ecclesiastical duties receive no aid from the Church, as they are able to support themselves.

One of the great purposes of our being placed on earth is for the development of character and the obtaining of useful experience. Under no other system is such an opportunity given to secure these results as under the Gospel of our Savior. To those who render obedience to the plan of salvation tests of character come continually, the true meaning of life grows apparent, and the soul is enriched with the experiences that give wisdom, courage and faithfulness. Those whom the Lord has chosen to stand at the head of the

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